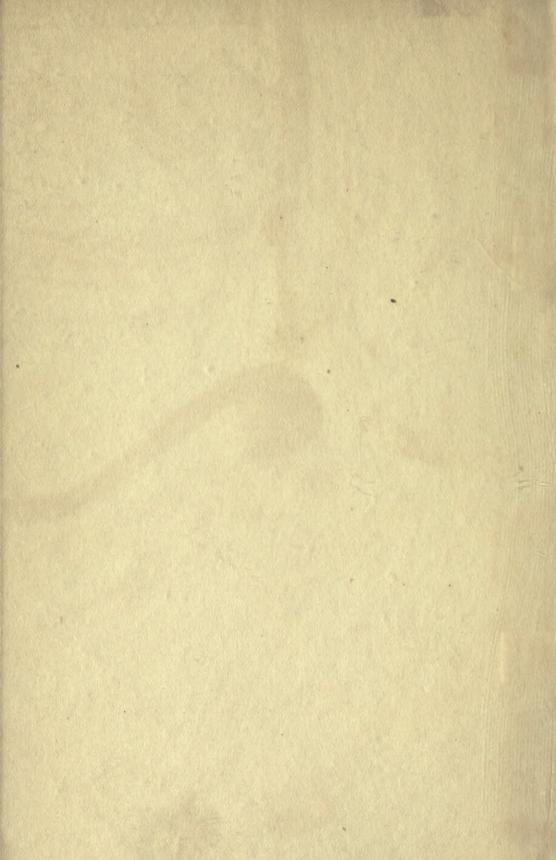
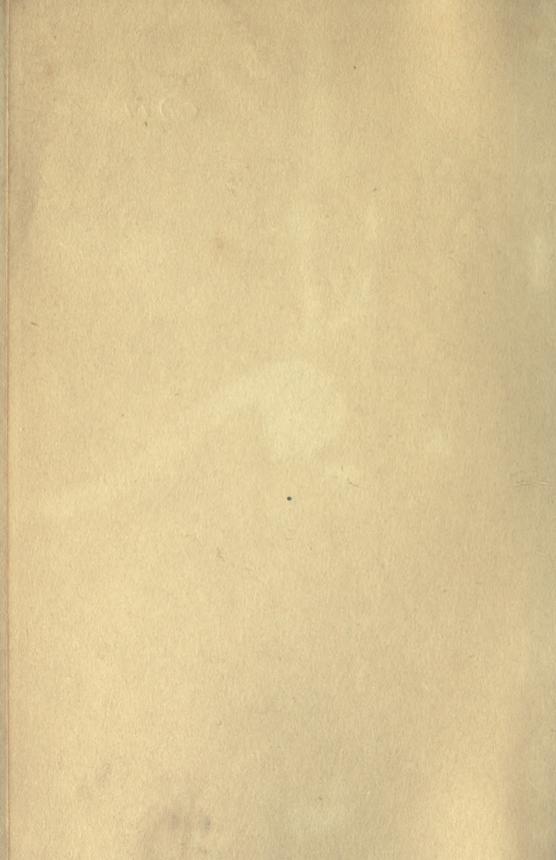


SHIANA

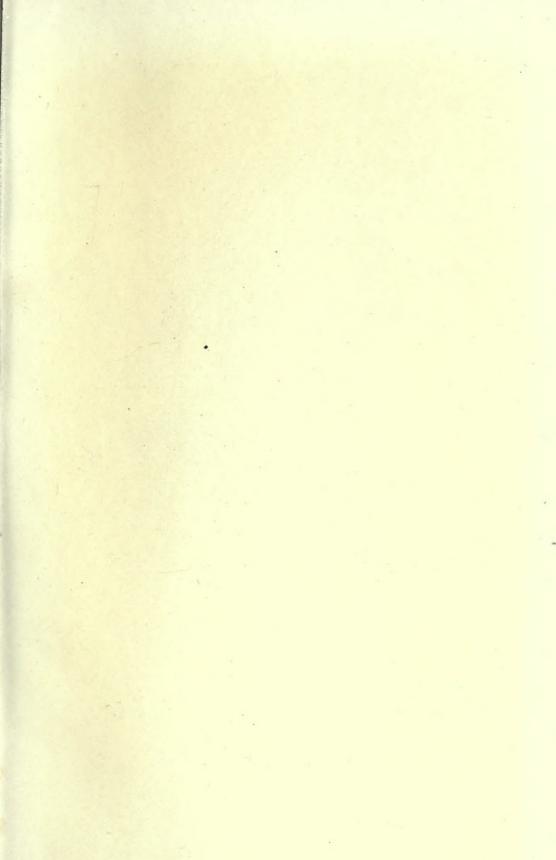






SHIANA

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Pearan Va lausaine.

SHIANA

From the Irish

OF

THE VERY REV. PETER CANON O'LEARY, P.P.

111

Dublin:
The Irish Book Company
6 D'Olier Street
Browne & Nolan, Limited
41 & 42 Nassau Street

1916

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

CANON O'LEARY'S story "Séaona" appeared as an Irish book about eleven years ago, and has been read with so much interest that it has now been thought well to publish it in English also. On its first appearance in serial form it was accompanied by an English translation which was intended for the help and instruction of students, and therefore gave an almost literal rendering of the text. a translation could not fairly be taken as the English equivalent of Canon O'Leary's Irish work; nor would it be any more reasonable to represent the exquisite Irish of "Séaona" by the ugly, garbled English known as "the brogue." Irish speakers, in districts uncontaminated by English, such as that in which Canon O'Leary grew up and in which he listened to the stories told by "Peg," have a perfect mastery of their own language, and use it with all the correctness and refinement and grace and power which, in the case of English, we look for only among the well-educated. Even small children speak Irish correctly, such a thing as "baby-talk" being unknown, so that in Canon O'Leary's book there is no difference between the Irish spoken by the little girls to each other in their comments upon "Séaona" and the Irish of the story itself; the one is as good and as dignified a form of speech as the other. At the same time, a child's thought often appears in little Peg's descriptions of things of which she has

no actual knowledge, such as the King's court and its surroundings, the "crown on his head," and the "Master of his household" who is not proof against "a gold-piece"; and again in the Gargantuan load of wine brought to the wedding feast in one cart, by one horse. These and many other little touches keep the youth of the story-teller before our minds, while the ease and the vigour with which she handles her language fill us with admiration.

Therefore it is that, by the author's wish and authority, and in order to make some attempt to represent good Irish by readable English, while retaining the true meaning of the original, the translation of "Séaona" has been revised and

re-cast in its present form.

November 29, 1915.

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SHIANA

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE WISHES.

By the fireside. Peg, Nora, Abbie, little Sheila, and Kate Buckley.

Nora.—Peg, tell us a story.

PEG.—I like that! Tell a story yourself.

Abbie.—She's no good, Peg; we would rather have your story.

Sheila.—Do tell one, Peg; we will be very quiet.

Peg.—How well you kept quiet last night, didn't you? when I was telling "The Dog with the Eight Legs!"

SHEILA.—Yes, because Kate Buckley wouldn't stop pinching me.

KATE.—What a story! I wasn't pinching you, you little witch!

ABBIE.—Don't mind her, Kate. There was nobody pinching her—she is only pretending that there was.

Sheila.—There was, indeed; and if there hadn't been I wouldn't have screamed.

Nora.—Tell Peg that you won't scream now, and she will tell us a story.

SHEILA.—I won't scream, Peg, whatever happens to me.

PEG.—Well, then, sit here near me, so that no one

can pinch you unknown to me.

KATE.—I'll engage the cat will pinch her. You little hussy, we would be having a fine story but for you and your screeching.

Abbie.—Hush, Kate, or you'll make her cry and we'll have no story. If we make Peg angry she won't tell a story to-night. Now, Peg, everybody's quiet, waiting for a story from you.

PEG.—There was a man long ago, and his name was Shiana, and he was a shoemaker. He had a nice cosy little house at the foot of a hill, on the sheltered side. He had a soogawn¹ chair which he had made for himself, and he used to sit in it in the evening when the day's work was done, and when he sat in it he was very comfortable. He had a malvogue² of meal hanging up near the fire, and now and then he used to put his hand into it and take a handful of the meal, and chew it at his leisure. He had an apple-tree growing outside his door, and when he used to be thirsty from chewing the meal he would put his hand into the tree and take one of the apples, and eat it.

SHEILA.—Oh, Peg, wasn't it nice!

PEG.—Which was nice, the chair or the meal or the apple?

SHEILA.—The apple, to be sure.

KATE.—I would rather have the meal. The apple wouldn't take one's hunger away.

ABBIE.—I would rather have the chair, and I would make Peg sit in it and tell stories.

 ¹ γάζάη, hay-rope.
 2 mealbόζ, a leather bag. (These Irish words are used by English-speakers without translation.)

PEG.—You are good at flattery, Abbie.

Abbie.—You are better at stories, Peg. How did it go with Shiana?

PEG.—One day, as he was making shoes, he found that he had no more leather, nor thread, nor wax. He had put on the last patch, and had made the last stitch, and he had to go and get materials before he could make any more shoes. He set out in the morning, with three shillings in his pocket, and he was not more than a mile from the house when he met a poor man asking for alms.

"Give me alms for the Saviour's sake, and for the souls of your dead, and for your health," said the

poor man.

Shiana gave him a shilling, and then he had only two shillings. He said to himself that perhaps the two shillings would do for what he wanted. He was only another mile from home when he met a poor woman, who was bare-footed.

"Give me some help," said she, "for the Saviour's sake, and for the souls of your dead, and for your

health."

He had pity on her, and gave her a shilling, and she went away. He had only one shilling then, but he went on, trusting that he might meet with some good fortune that would enable him to do his errand. Soon afterwards he met a child crying with cold and hunger.

"For the Saviour's sake," said the child, "give

me something to eat."

There was an inn close by, and Shiana went into it and bought a loaf of bread and brought it to the child. When the child received the bread his appearance changed. He grew tall, and a strange

light glowed in his eyes and in his features, so that Shiana was terrified.

SHEILA.—Oh, dear me, Peg, I suppose poor Shiana fainted.

PEG.—He did not faint, but indeed it was all he could do to keep from it. As soon as he could speak he said,

"What sort of person are you?" And the answer

he got was,

"Shiana, God is gracious to you. I am an angel. I am the third angel to whom you have given alms to-day for the Saviour's sake. And now you are to have three wishes from the God of Glory. Ask now of God any three wishes you please, and you will get them. But I have one piece of advice to give you.—Don't forget Mercy."

"And do you tell me that I shall get my wish?"

said Shiana.

"Certainly I do," said the angel.

"Very well," said Shiana. "I have a nice little soogaun chair at home, and every dalteen that comes in must needs sit in it. The next person that sits in it, except myself, may he stick in it!"

"Oh, fie, fie, Shiana!" said the angel; "there is a beautiful wish gone to waste. You have two more;

don't forget Mercy."

"I have," said Shiana, "a little malvogue of meal at home, and every dalteen that comes in must needs push his fist into it. The next person that puts his hand into that malvogue, except myself, may he stick in it!"

"Oh, Shiana, Shiana, you have not an atom of

¹ oailcín, a youngster (especially, an impudent youngster).

sense!" said the angel. "Now you have only one wish more. Ask the Mercy of God for your soul."

"Oh, you are right," said Shiana; "I was near forgetting it. I have a little apple-tree beside my door, and every dalteen that comes the way must needs put up his hand and pull an apple and carry it off. The next person, except myself, that puts his hand into that tree, may he stick in it!—Oh, people," said he, as he burst out laughing, "won't I make fun of them!"

When he came out of his laughing-fits, he looked up, and the angel was gone. He thought for a good while of the position he was in. At last he said to himself, "Well now, there isn't a greater fool in Ireland than I! If I had three people stuck by this time, one in the chair, and one in the malvogue, and one in the tree, what good would that do me, far from home, without food or drink or money?"

No sooner had he said it than he saw opposite him, in the place where the angel had been, a tall, slight, black-haired man, who was staring at him, with a sort of electric fire coming out of his eyes like baneful sparks. He had two horns, like those of a he-goat, and a long, coarse, steel-grey "goatee" beard; a tail like a fox's tail, and a hoof like a bull's hoof on one of his feet. Shiana's mouth and eyes opened wide, and he ceased speaking. After a while the Black Man spoke.

"Shiana," said he, "you need not be afraid of me. I do not mean to do you harm. I would like to do you good if you would take my advice. I heard you say just now that you were without food or drink or money. I would give you as much money as you could want, on one small condition only."

"And, be hanged to you!" said Shiana, his speech returning to him, "couldn't you say that without paralysing a man with your staring, whoever you may be?"

"You need not care who I am; but I will give you money enough now to buy as much leather as will keep you working for thirteen years, on this condition

-that you will come with me then."

"And if I make the bargain with you, where will

we go then?"

"Won't it be time enough for you to ask that question when the leather is used up and we shall be starting?"

"You are sharp-witted. Have your way. Let

us see the money."

"You are sharp-witted. Look here!"—the Black Man put his hand into his pocket and drew out a large purse, and from the purse he let out upon his palm a little heap of fine yellow gold.

"Look," said he, and he stretched out his hand and put the heap of beautiful glittering pieces up under the eyes of poor Shiana. Shiana held out both his hands, and the fingers of the hands spread themselves toward the gold.

"Gently!" said the Black Man, drawing the gold back to him; "the bargain is not made yet."

"Let it be a bargain," said Shiana.

"Without fail?" said the Black Man.

"Without fail," said Shiana.

"By the virtue of the Holy Things?" said the Black Man.

"By the virtue of the Holy Things," said Shiana.

CHAPTER II.

THE BARGAIN CONCLUDED.

Norm.—Well—Peg! We are here—again. I am out of breath—I was running. I was afraid—that the story would be going on before I came, and that I should have lost some of it.

Peg.—Indeed, Nora dear, we would wait for you.

It is not long since Abbie came.

ABBIE.—No, for we were doing a churning, and I had to go west with the butter to Ballinyarra; and when I was coming home by the short cut, the night fell, and I promise you I got a start. I was thinking of Shiana, and of the gold, and of the Black Man and of the sparks that were coming out of his eyes, while I was running, so that I might not be late, when I raised my head, and what should I see but something standing right opposite me—the gollaun! At the first look I gave at it I could have sworn it had horns!

Nora.—Oh, nonsense, Abbie, be quiet, and don't be bothering us with your gollauns and your horns.

Horns on a gollaun! Think of it!

ABBIE.—Perhaps if you'd been there yourself you wouldn't have been so ready with your fun.

SHEILA.—See now, who is stopping the story! Maybe

Kate Buckley would say it was I?

KATE.—I won't, Sheila. You are a good girl to-night, and I am very fond of you, my darling, my heart's darling!

¹ gollán, a pillar-stone.

Sheila.—Oh, yes indeed! Wait till you are vexed, and maybe then you won't say "my darling!" Abbie.—Now, now, stop, girls. I and my gollaum are the cause of all this trouble. Put away that stocking, Peg, and let us have the story. Did Shiana get the purse? Many a person has been near getting a purse and then didn't get it.

PEG.—As soon as Shiana said the words: "by the virtue of the Holy Things!" a change came over the appearance of the Black Man. He showed his teeth, both above and below, and they were tightly clenched. A sort of crooning sound came from his mouth, but Shiana could not make out whether he was laughing or growling. But when he looked up into the Black Man's eyes, the same terror was near coming upon him that he had felt at first. He saw well enough that the fellow was not laughing. He had never seen a worse pair of eyes, nor a more malignant look than the look that was in them, nor a brow so hard and forbidding as the brow that was above them; so he did not speak, and he did his best to pretend that he did not notice the growling.

At the same time the Black Man let the gold out

again upon his hand, and counted it.

"Here," said he. "Shiana, there are a hundred pounds for you for the first shilling you gave away to-day. Are you paid?"

"It is a big return," said Shiana. "It is only

right that I should be."

"Right or wrong," said the Black Man, "are you paid?" and the growling became sharper and quicker.

"Oh, I am paid, I am paid," said Shiana, "my

thanks to you."

"Here, then," said he. "There is another hundred for you, for the second shilling you gave away today."

"That is the shilling I gave to the woman who was

bare-footed."

"That is the shilling you gave to the same lady."

"If she was a lady, how did she come to be barefooted? And what made her take my shilling from me, when I had only one other shilling left?"

"If she was a lady! If you only knew! She is

the Lady that ruined me!"

While he was saying those words he began to tremble, hand and foot. The growling ceased. His head fell back upon his neck. He gazed up into the sky. A death-like appearance came over him, and the look of a corpse upon his face.

When Shiana saw this change of colour he was

very much surprised.

"This," said he, carelessly, "cannot be the first

time that you have heard tell of that Lady."

The Black Man jumped. He struck a blow with his hoof upon the ground, so that the sod under Shiana's foot trembled.

"Maiming to you!" said he. "Shut your mouth

or you will be hurt!"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Shiana, meekly.
"I thought that perhaps you had taken a little drop, seeing that you gave me a hundred pounds in exchange

for a shilling."

"I would give you that, and seven hundred, if I could take away anything from the good that that same shilling did; but since you gave it away for the Saviour's sake, it is for ever impossible to spoil the good it has done."

"And," said Shiana, "what need is there to spoil the good? May you not as well leave alone the good that was done by that shilling?"

"You talk too much; too much altogether. I told you to shut your mouth. Here! There is the

whole purse for you," said the Black Man.
"I suppose there is no fear, sir," said Shiana, "that there wouldn't be enough in it to last the time? There is many a day in thirteen years. A man would have made many a shoe during that length of time, and there's many a way in which he would need a shilling."

"Don't be uneasy," said the Black Man, giving a little laugh. "Draw out of it as hard as ever you can. It will be as plump the last day as it is to-day.

After that you won't have much use for it."

Shiana was satisfied.

"Thirteen years!" he said to himself. "And power to draw out of it as hard as I can. He made me swear by the virtue of the Holv Things, but I swear by every oath and yow to you, little purse, that you will be made to play music !- Good-bye to you," said he to the Black Man.

He turned on his heel to go home, but when he turned, on went the Black Man beside him. quickened his pace. The other quickened his too.

"What shall I do?" said Shiana to himself. "The

neighbours will see him."

"Never fear," said the Black Man. "Nobody will see me but yourself. I must escort you home, and learn the way there, and get a look at that soogaun chair of yours, and at the malvogue and at the apples."

"Bad luck to them for a chair and a malvogue and

an apple-tree! Three beautiful things have been spoilt for me to-day because of them," said Shiana.

"That is not the worst part of the story," said the Black Man; "but if a neighbour comes in and sits in the chair, you will have to give him house-room, free of rent, because you won't be able to put him out when you have got him stuck in the chair."

"Good gracious me! What shall I do if there are three people stuck at home before me now?" said Shiana. "Perhaps, sir, you would be able to release them. Come along. You are welcome a thousand

times."

"Patience, patience, Shiana!" said the Black Man. "There is nobody stuck yet. You were churlish a while ago, and now 'I am welcome a thousand times.' Ah! Shiana, that is a welcome for your own good."

"Well, the way the case stands, sir"—said Shiana, and he looked up at the horns and down at the hoof.

"Oh, I see," said the Black Man. "You don't like the make of this shoe, nor the kind of ornament that is on my head. Never mind that. When you get used to them you will find no fault with them at all."

"Why, indeed and indeed now, sir," said Shiana, believe me, I was not thinking of them. But if the neighbours were to see you they would be frightened, and harm might be done perhaps."

"The very thing! Haven't I just told you there was no fear that anybody would see me but your-

self?" said the Black Man.

"Very well," said Shiana. "Come along."
Sheila.—Oh, goodness, Peg! I think if I were to

see him the life would go out of me there and then.

KATE.—What's the good of your talking like that?

Didn't he say that no one could see him but
Shiana himself?

SHEILA.—Ah, Kate dear, how do you know he was telling the truth? I wouldn't believe a word from the rogue.

KATE.—Didn't he give the money to Shiana all

right?

ABBIE.—How do you know it was really money? I heard somebody say that old Michael Redmond was in a public-house one day in Millstreet, and that he owed the landlady two and eightpence, and that she was keeping his hat in pledge for the money. Michael went out into the yard and picked up four or five little bits of slate, and after doing some sort of devilment over them, he took them in to her, and when she looked at them she thought they were lawful money, and she gave him his hat. They used to say that Michael learned "Freemashun" from the Knight, and that he could make a goat of you, but that if the wind changed while you were a goat, he could not turn you back.

JAMES BUCKLEY. - God save you all here!

Peg.—Oh, God and Mary be with you, James. It is your sister you want, I suppose.

JAMES.—Yes, she is told to come home at once. Nell

has come.

KATE.—Oh, nonsense, James! When did she come? JAMES.—Just a little while ago.

KATE.—God give a good night to you, Peg, and to you all.

Peg.—May you go safe, Kate. Kate.—You won't tell any more to-night, Peg? Peg.—Very well, I won't, Kate.

CHAPTER III.

THE BLACK MAN DISAPPEARS.

PEG.—Welcome, Kate!

KATE.—Long life to you, Peg! I fancy I am the first to-night.

Peg.—Indeed you are; you are first of them all, except little Sheila.

KATE.—How could I be before Sheila, who is always here with you?

Sheila.—She will be before everybody now since her sister has a little son.

PEG.—Hush, you little hussy. How is Nell, Kate? KATE.—She is very well, Peg, and the baby is well, too. And, oh! indeed and indeed, Peg, he is the nicest and prettiest and fairest baby you ever set eyes upon, and I am his mother.

Peg.—You! I thought Nell was his mother.

KATE.—Ah, what nonsense I am talking! Of course, so she is. But it was I that baptized him.

PEG.—What? Kate, my dear, what was the need for that when he wasn't going to die? Wasn't the priest there?

KATE.—Ach, what is that I am saying? Why, of course, it was the priest that baptized him, and it was I that stood for him for the baptism,

myself and James. But what put it into your head that he should be going to die, Peg? There are no signs of dying about him, God

bless him !-never you fear.

Peg.—Why, you said first that you were his mother, and then that it was you that had baptized him; and the Catechism says that nobody but the priest could baptize him, unless he were dying and that there was no priest there.

SHEILA.—I think the way it is with Kate just now is that her foot doesn't know what her hand

is going to do.

KATE.—I declare, Sheila, you are right! My foot doesn't know what my hand will do, and I myself don't know what my foot or my hand will do! If you saw him, Sheila, you would be very fond of him. I am so fond of him myself that I think I shall eat him!

ABBIE (coming in).—Why, Kate, what is that you are saying? I shouldn't like you to be very fond of me, if that is what you would do to me!

Peg.—Welcome, Abbie! Have you seen Nora coming?

ABBIE.—She is just coming to the door. She was beckoning to me to wait for her, but I was afraid that I would lose some of that story of Shiana.

Nora (coming in).—You see now, Abbie, it wasn't

worth your while not to wait for me.

Peg.—Welcome, Nora! You haven't done badly; you are not far behind her. Now, girls, move up here near the fire. The evening is a little bit chilly. There! Now I think we are pretty snug.

ABBIE.—See how well Sheila settles herself near Kate without being afraid that she will be pinched!

Sheila.—Whisper, Kate! What is his name?

KATE.—It is Edmund.

Peg.—And his father is Edmund. This is young Edmund—Edmund $\tilde{o}g^1$ O'Flynn. It is a fine name, Kate. I congratulate you.

Nor.—And I congratulate Shiana, Peg, because he got the purse, with leave to draw out of it. But how did he part with the vagabond? Or did he part with him at all?

SHEILA.—I'm afraid he didn't part well with him.

PEG.—He didn't part with him until they reached Shiana's house. They had hardly turned their faces homeward when Shiana saw the child again with the loaf under his arm, and he was in the same childish form as when he saw him first. He looked very gratefully at Shiana, and then fled out of his sight.

Not long after that, Shiana saw the barefooted woman, and she also looked at him very thankfully, and she opened her right hand so that he saw the shilling there in the middle of her palm, and then she fled from his sight just as the child had done.

After another while Shiana saw, walking on the road out before him, the poor man to whom he had given the first shilling. The poor man's back was turned to him, but even so he knew him quite well.

"I wonder," said Shiana to himself, "if he has kept the shilling I gave him, as the woman kept hers, and as the child kept the loaf."

No sooner had he thought that, than the poor man turned on his heel and faced them. There were two large tears falling from his eyes. He stretched out his two hands, wide open, so that Shiana could see his two palms, and they were both empty. When Shiana saw that, he gave a side look at the Black Man, but though he did, he took no notice of it. He did not pretend to have seen the poor man. When Shiana looked back again, the poor man was gone.

They went on. Neither of them spoke a word. One of the neighbours met them, and saluted Shiana.

"God and Mary with you, Shiana," said he.
"How early in the day you have come home from the town, and you alone too!"

"I hadn't much to do," said he, and he gave another side-look at the Black Man. The Black Man took no notice of him, and then Shiana under-

stood that the neighbour had not seen him.

They went into the house. The chair was there near the fireplace, and it had not stirred since Shiana had left it in the morning. The malvogue was hanging there, just as he had seen it in the morning when he had taken the last handful of meal out of it. The Black Man looked at the chair and at the malvogue. Then he looked at Shiana.

"Move that," said he.

Shiana went over and put his hand on the back of the chair.

"Oh!" said he. "It has stuck!"

He put both hands on it. He failed to make it bend or turn.

"Good gracious!" said he. "It is as firm as the handle in a mallet!"

"Move the malvogue," said the Black Man. He went up and put his hand on the malvogue. It was stuck as tightly to the side of the wall as a stone would stick to the ice.

Shiana paused and bent his head.

"Well," said he, "I am done for now, if I never was before. I don't know in the world nor in all creation what I am to do! I don't know from the five heights of Heaven what I shall do! No matter what care I take about it, somebody will come, and in spite of my utmost efforts to prevent him, he'll sit in it, and the whole countryside will be in red war round me! I shall be killed on my own hearth-stone without pity or remorse!—Perhaps, sir, that you would be able to take the curse off them?"

"'Perhaps I would be able to take the curse off them,' after he himself had put it upon them with all his heart," said the Black Man, bitterly. "'Wouldn't he make fun of them!'—Where is the

fun now?"

"The fun is in a bad way, I admit," said Shiana, "but even if it is, it is not right for you to throw it in my face. I suppose you never made a bad blunder yourself. Who is that lady that ruined you?"

"Stop! Stop, Shiana! Let us drop it, blunder as it is. I will take the curse off these things for you, on condition that you will never speak to anyone, living or dead, about the bargain that you and

I have made with one another."

"I assure you that I have no desire to speak of it to anyone. The fact is, I was afraid that you would be chattering about it to somebody. But

if you wish us both to keep it secret, I am quite satisfied."

The Black Man went up and bent down near the chair, and with the thumb of his right hand he made a ring on the ground round about it, and Shiana noticed that out of the place where his thumb was drawn along the ground there arose a vapour like the vapour of fire, and that the thumb made a mark upon the ground such as a bar of red-hot iron would make.

Then Shiana looked out at the apple-tree, in dread lest perhaps he might see a boy stuck high up in it. He went out, and the Black Man went with him. Shiana did not see any person in the tree, but he saw what appeared to be a bird on the topmost branch. The bird was shaking its wings as if it were trying to rise from the tree and were not able. They came near to the tree. Shiana looked at the Black Man. The Black Man was looking up at the bird.

"He is stuck in the tree, sir," said Shiana.

The Black Man did not speak. He went over to the tree, and he bent down and put the thumb of his right hand on the ground at the foot of the tree. Then he drew the thumb along the ground round about the tree. Shiana saw a smoky vapour coming out of the ground in the part where the thumb touched it. A red ring remained on the grass at the foot of the tree after the thumb, just as it would if a red-hot iron had been drawn along it. The Black Man stood up when he had done that. Shiana looked up at the top of the tree. The bird was gone. Shiana was surprised that he had not heard it going. He heard no sound of wings, but the bird was gone.

Then they went in again. The Black Man went up to the malvogue and made a ring round it on the wall, and the same vapour came out of the wall, and the same trace remained afterwards upon it. While he was stooping Shiana looked sharply at the tail, as he had the opportunity. He saw, out at the very tip of it, a great long, crooked, thick claw, with a dangerous-looking point upon it, and it kept swaying from side to side continually, as a cat's tail does when he is watching for a mouse.

"By the deer, my lad," said Shiana, in his own mind, "if you get an itching, you will have no

lack of nails!"

Just as if Shiana had spoken aloud, the Black Man raised his head and looked at him.

"Beware of that nail," said he, "for fear that it might take the itch off you and give you pain instead of the itch. Go up now and move the chair."

Shiana went up, and he was trembling very much. He put his hand gently on the chair, and when he did, it moved to his touch as easily as ever. He put his hand on the *malvogue*, and no sooner did he touch it than it moved back and forward along the wall. He looked at the Black Man.

"Oh, sir," he said, "I am very thankful to you! Oh, oh, oh! may God prosper you greatly, and His Blessed Mother!"

Oh, my dear people! As soon as that word came out of Shiana's mouth the Black Man changed. He raised up his two hands as high as his horns. A blue flame came out of his eyes. The hoof danced; the tail rose; the claw spread out; and he gave a roar like the roar of a mad lion. The roar began with a growl, and it swelled and strengthened until the

floor shook, and the house shook, and the mountain shook all round the place. When Shiana saw the change, and when he heard the sound and the power of that roar, swelling and rising, the house whirled about him, a cloud came before his eyes, and he fell like a dead lump on the floor, unconscious and speechless.

SHEILA.—Oh, Peg! I see him, I see him! oh! oh! oh! PEG.—Hush, hush, Sheila dear! What do you see?

SHEILA.—Oh, the man with the horns! The man with the horns! What shall I do? What shall I do? Oh!

KATE.—The neighbours will hear her. Hush, Sheila, my darling.

ABBIE.—Your mother is coming up the field, Peg. Peg.—Come over, Sheila, and sit here on my lap.

SHEILA.—Oh! oh! What shall I do? What shall I do? Oh! oh!

MARY (mother of Peg and Sheila).—What's this you are going on with here? What made you cry, Sheila, my lamb?

SHEILA.—Oh, I don't know, mother. It is just that I got frightened, and I thought I saw the man with the horns.

MARY.—The man with the horns! Why, who is he?

Sheila.—The man with the tail, I meant to say.

MARY.—The man with the tail?

Sheila.—The man with the tail that had a claw in it.

Mary.—Well, indeed now, Peg, 'tis a great shame for you. You have spoilt all the youngsters of the place. I don't know in the world how you

have gathered together all the raimaishes 1 that you have in your head, or how you can keep account of them, you that are only thirteen up to May next. What is the story that is going on now, Sheila?

Sheila.—It's "Shiana," mother, but I think he's dead.

Mary.—I'll engage he's not, and that he won't be, till I don't know when.

SHEILA.—Well then indeed he got a terrible fright.

If I were in his place I'd be as dead as Art.²

Mary.—I thought there were five or six of you here. Where are the others?

Peg.—I think, mother, that they ran away from you.

Mary.—They need not have done that. Get up, Peg, my dear, and get us something to eat. Indeed, it is a great wonder you should have given this child such a fright. Listen to that sigh coming from her. I fancy she is asleep.

Sheila.—Ach, no, mother, I am not. I am not a bit sleepy. It doesn't matter a pin. Nobody gave me a fright. I did it myself. If I had not kept thinking of him so hard as I did, I wouldn't have seen him. I won't think of him any more, the thief! I don't know in the world, Peg, what made him give such a roar as that?

Peg.—Your supper is ready now, mother. Come here to me, Sheila, and let your mother eat her supper. There!

¹ páiméir, nonsense; silly tales.

² Apt mac Cumm, one of the ancient Kings of Ireland.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAIR.

Abbie.—Well, Sheila, where's Peg?

Sheila.—She went over to William Buckley's. The world wouldn't satisfy Kate without her going over to see young Edmund. We are bothered with her and young Edmund. If you were talking to her she couldn't say two words without having young Edmund here, there and everywhere. She would try to persuade you that he notices her and knows her from anybody else, already, when he is only a week old! The other night, before you came, she told Peg that she herself was his mother, and then that it was she that had baptised him, and in the end she said she was afraid that she would eat him!

ABBIE.—Indeed, Sheila, I remember the word right well. I was just coming in at the door when I heard it, and I wondered very much who it was for whom she had so much affection. Do you

think Peg will be long?

SHEILA.—No, I think not. It is a good while since they went. She told me to mind the fire well, so that it should be burning finely for you and Nora Bawn. And she told me to tell you all that she would not stay away any longer than she could help.

Abbie.—Well, here's Nora. I am before you, Nora. Nora.—Oh, I don't care, Abbie, when the story is not going on. But where's Peg?

¹ bán, white; fairhaired.

ABBIE.—We won't get any of the story to-night, I am afraid. I'll have to tell you a story myself.

NORA.—You couldn't! Where is Peg, Sheila?

Peg.—She is here, Nora, my dear. (Peg and Kate come in.)

Nora (to Abbie).—Bad manners to you, you little hussy!—How is young Edmund, Kate?

ABBIE.—I suppose she has eaten him by this time.

KATE.—Ochone! Soon nobody will be able to escape from this one, she is turning out so quickwitted!

ABBIE.—Oh, you are quite right, Kate. I never thought what I was saying. Indeed, it's no wonder you should be fond of him since you are his mother. (They all burst out laughing.)

KATE.—Oh, for all sakes, Peg, go on with your story, and see if it will put a stop to these!

Abbie.—Do, Peg; and cut off my ear if there is a single sound from any one of us.

PEG.—Where's Sheila? I thought she was there just now.

KATE.—Here she is behind me, with her head under my cloak, like a chicken getting under a hen.

PEG.—Why, Sheila, pet, what ails you now?

SHEILA.—Ach, nothing at all, Peg; but I must cover up my head for a while for fear the man with the horns should give another roar, and that I should see him again.

PEG.-No fear of you.

When Shiana came to himself and looked about him, the man with the horns was gone.

SHEILA.—May he go and never come again, the scoundrel!

PEG.—I dare say Shiana was very much inclined

to say the same thing to him, when he came to himself and found himself alone. There was a death-like sweat upon him, and terror in his eyes, but all the same, whatever he said, the first thing he did was to put his hand into his pocket to see if he had the purse, and upon my word he had. It was there, in the same pocket that he had put it in, and it was fine and plump, and fine and heavy.

He put his hand into another of his pockets, and there he found the two hundred pounds that had been given to him in exchange for the two shillings.

"If I had only let him go on that time," said he to himself, "I should have three hundred; but that makes no difference, for I heard him say that the purse would be always full, in spite of what was taken out of it."

He put the money back in his pocket, and put up the purse neatly and carefully in the inside-pocket of his waistcoat. Then he stood up and shook himself, and I promise you that the remembrance of the

fright was soon gone from him.

"Well," said he, "I must buy a horse, and not be killing myself going to Mass on foot every Sunday and holy day. And I must buy a cow and not be depending on one of those little apples to take away my thirst. And indeed I suppose I shall have to marry, for how could I milk the cow myself? But whatever I may do, I must eat something now. I haven't been so hungry for a year!"

He looked up at the *malvogue* and at the chair, and upon my word he felt a sort of fear about going near them. He looked carefully at the ground all round the chair, and when he did, there he saw quite plainly the mark of the thumb. He thought that even still

there was a burnt smell from it. He put the tip of his finger on the chair. No sooner did he do so than the chair moved at his touch quite freely. That encouraged him, and he sat down in it. He moved it back and forward; it moved with him quite well. His mind was satisfied. He put his hand into the malvogue and began to eat his little bit of meal as usual. As soon as he felt thirsty he went out and brought in a couple of the apples and ate them.

Next morning he started early for the fair to buy a horse and a milch cow.

It was not long till the neighbours met him.

"Hullo, Shiana," said one of them, "what happened to you yesterday evening? We all thought that a thunder-bolt had fallen on your house and that you had been burnt alive. I never heard such thunder."

"You are wrong," said another. "It wasn't thunder, but a roar like the bellow of a bull."

"Whisht," said a third man. "Where's the bull

that could give such a bellow as that?"

"I was sitting," said a fourth, "on the top of the Ivy Rock, and I could see the house, and when I heard all the noise I looked over, and I saw what looked like an eagle and a pitch-black flight of crows rising up into the sky, and I was surprised to think that they should have been able to make such a noise as that."

So they went on, talking and arguing and discussing, and Shiana did not speak a word. They kept all the conversation to themselves, and he did not grudge it to them. He had no wish to talk, for fear that some word might slip from him that would dis-

close his mind. Beside all that, he had matter for thought that kept him occupied. He was thinking of the horse and of the cow and of what all the neighbours would say when they saw him on horseback. They would ask where he got the money. What excuse would he have to give?

When they reached the fair-green, and Shiana saw all the horses, he was bewildered, and did not know what it would be best for him to do. There were big horses there, and little horses, old horses and young horses, black horses and white horses, grey horses and speckled horses, horses neighing and horses leaping, horses that had fine skins and were well-built and powerful, and ugly little shaggy colts. Among them all he utterly failed to fix his mind upon the one that he would like.

At last he laid his eye upon a fine jet-black horse. well-knit and full of braced-up energy, that was cantering about the field with a light lissom rider on his back. Shiana moved up and beckoned to the rider. Before the rider had time to notice him, three other horsemen passed him, and they all four went off down the field at full gallop. There was a double fence between them and the field outside, and they all four went freely, lightly, with well-directed speed. over the fence, without letting forefoot or hind-foot touch it. Then on they went right ahead in a straight line without any one of them having an inch of advantage over another. On they went, the breast and the slender body of each horse all but touching the green grass of the field, the head of each horse stretched out to full length, the head of each rider bent down, and all rushing along as a "fairy wind" would rush.

There was not a person, young or old, in the whole fair, that was not standing bolt upright to watch them, except the thimble-rigger.

When they were making for the second fence, every one noticed that the black horse was a little bit in front. When they were clearing the fence the black horse and the horse next to him swept over it like crows, without touching it. The other two touched it with their hoofs. The ground went from under the feet of the furthest horse, and he and his rider fell on the other side of the fence.

"Oh!! He is killed!" all the people shouted. The shout was not out of their mouth when he was mounted again, but his horse was lame, and he had to return.

On went the three, the whole fair watching them, the people so mute that Shiana heard distinctly the rapping, resounding, measured, sharp beats of the horses' feet as they struck the sod of the field, just as a dancer would in dancing upon boards.

Shiana noticed by this time that the black horse was well to the front, making straight for a post that was set up in the field, with a red flag of some sort at the top of it. Round that post he swept. Round went the second horse after him. Round went the third horse after him. On they went after each other, to his left, to the north-east, the black horse in front and getting away from them. The last horse quickened his pace and began to gain upon the second horse. The second quickened, and they both were gaining on the black horse. Then Shiana and all the fair saw a sight. The black horse stretched himself, the rider gave him his head, and out he went like a greyhound, so that you would think his feet didn't

touch the ground, but that he was sailing along near the ground like a hawk.

At that moment there rose a wild shout from the place to the north-east for which the horses were making. The shout was taken up all round the fair. Shiana had to put his fingers in his ears, or his head would have been split. Everybody was running and everybody was shouting. Shiana ran and shouted with them, and he did not know why.

When the running and the shouting ceased, Shiana saw opposite him six or seven gentlemen, with fleshy heads and big stomachs, and dressed in suits of broadcloth, talking together and looking at the black horse.

"How much would you sell him for?" said one of them to the rider.

"For a thousand pounds," said the rider.

When Shiana heard that, he turned on his heel, saying in his own mind, "I would have no business with him. He'd kill me."

Who should be behind him but the thimble-rigger.

"He would kill you, would he?" said the thimblerigger. "Why, confound you, you little yellow shoemaker with the *malvogue*, of the race of the brown leather patches and thick awls and smelly shoes, if you haven't presumption, to be coming here to buy a horse, and without a penny in your pocket!"

When Shiana heard that, he turned away. He slipped his hand down into his pocket. On my word it was empty! He searched another pocket—empty also! He put his hand into his bosom, to look for the purse. There was no sign of it there. He gave a side-look at the thimble-man. The man was minding

his own business and taking no more notice of Shiana than if he had never seen him.

"Well," said Shiana to himself, "there's the end of the showing off! It's easier since the curse has been taken off the malvogue and the chair and the tree. I suppose it can't have been put on again. At all events, I have nothing to do now but to go and see if I can buy some leather, and go and stick to the business I know best. If they are strong-smelling shoes, the people who wear them don't find any fault with them. It's a bad thing for a man not to be satisfied with what he has, little though it be. If I had my three shillings now, they would do my business as well as all the hundreds. But it's all right. It is no use talking about the thing. I'll go to Grev Dermot, and perhaps he might give me some leather on credit till the money for the shoes comes in. He has given me credit before, and I paid him fully and honestly."

By the time he had thought that, he was making straight for Dermot's door. Dermot himself was standing between the doorposts.

"Oh, Shiana, is that you?" said Dermot.

"'Tis, indeed," said Shiana. "Are you well, Dermot?"

"We have our health, thanks be to God for it! But what was this that happened to you lately? You are in everybody's mouth, and no two stories or two accounts about you are alike. One person says that you saw a ghost. Another says your house fell upon you. Another says a flash of lightning killed you. A fourth says that you have found some money that was going astray. And so on with all of them, each having his own conclusion about you.

What did you do? Or what have you on hand? Or what is the cause of all this fuss?"

"I don't know in the world, Dermot. But I think there is one thing plain enough, and that is that I haven't found any money going astray. I suppose that if I had I wouldn't be coming here now in the hope of getting some leather on credit as I did before."

"Oh, indeed you shall, and welcome. How much

do you want?"

"If I had as much as would make shoes for two it would be enough for me this time, and when those were sold and I had the money, I would pay you and take some more."

"You may as well take the more with you now at one carrying. Take a pound's worth."

CHAPTER V.

MYSTIFICATION.

ABBIE.—Take care that the money didn't turn into little flat bits of slate, as Michael Redmond's money did.

Peg.—That's not what you said before, Abbie, but that Michael turned the bits of slate into money.

ABBIE.—And so he did, too, but then the money turned into bits of slate again.

Nora.—Just hear her! Don't our ears remember your saying to us that he brought the money in to the woman, and that she looked at it, and

that she thought it was lawful money, and by the same token, that she gave him his hat?

ABBIE.—Yes, she did think that, and she did give the hat. But it was after that that the money turned into bits of slate again.

Nora.—And how could it turn back into bits of slate again, unless Michael himself were to take the witchcraft off it?

KATE.—And how do you know he didn't?

Nora.—She said he went away home when he got his hat.

ABBIE.—But then he was in Millstreet a week afterwards, he and "Thade of the Eggs," and they went into the same house, and Michael called the woman aside. "I owe you two and eight pence," said he. "Here it is for you." "You don't owe me any two and eight pence," said she. "I do, honestly," said he. "Here it is for you." "But I say you do not," said she. "Don't you remember," said she, "that I was keeping your hat, and that you got the money somewhere and gave it to me?" "What did you do with it?" said Michael. "I didn't do anything with it," said she. "I have it here in the box yet." "I would like to see it," said Michael. "It is there," said she; "a shilling and two sixpences and two fourpenny pieces. Come here," said she, "and see them again for yourself." They went over to the box and she opened it, and when she looked into it and saw the little bits of slate, she turned upon Michael and looked at him as she would look at a mad dog. "Here," said Michael,

handing the money to her. "Keep it!" said she, "and leave my house! The Evil One is in it, and in you too! Be off!"—I promise you they both went, and in a hurry too.

Sheila.—I wonder what she did with the five little bits of slate?

ABBIE.—I don't know, Sheila. But I rather think they got the outside of the door as quickly as the two men.

Sheila.—I would be afraid to touch them.

KATE.—I heard that he made a goat of Thade of the Eggs.

ABBIE.—He didn't do that, but indeed he set the broom beating him. He made the broom turn Thade out of the house.

Nora.—Oh, how, Abbie?

ABBIE.—Well, they were all, the full of the place of them, gathered west at Thade of the Eggs' house, playing cards, and some disturbance arose between them, so that Michael said to Thade, "If you don't shut your mouth, I'll make a goat of you." "You couldn't do it," said Thade. "I could," said Michael. "Do your best, and don't make two parts of it," said Thade. "Do you mean that?" said Michael. "I do," said Thade. "Let us see now what you can do." Michael drew a little black book out of his pocket, and there were red edges on the leaves of it, and he began to read it. After a while he stopped, and he looked at Thade. "There is only one danger in the thing, Thade," said he. "If the wind were to change while you were a goat, I couldn't turn you back." "What, you thief of the

black gallows! Why didn't you tell me that at first?" "I am telling it to you now, and you have only to tell me to stop in time." "Stop, then," said Thade. "I wouldn't believe from all the world that you could do it, but at the same time I don't mind letting you play your tricks upon somebody else." engage," said Michael, "that the broom will put you out at the door if I tell it to do it." Thade looked at the broom. It was standing near the door. It was a fine new heavy broom. All the company laughed when they heard the word. "You couldn't put me out yourself," said Thade, "and it is hard to believe that you could make the broom do what you couldn't do yourself." "I couldn't put you out myself," said Michael; "and, if you had a good stick, there are no four men here that could put you out" (Thade had got a name for his great strength since the day when he beat the seven men who followed him from Millstreet to kill him); "but I'll bet you now that that broom below will put you out." Thade got his stick ready, and Michael spoke to the broom. Thade stood in the middle of the house. The broom rose and tried to strike him between the eyes. The stick was good and the arm was strong, and indeed Thade defended his head and face, but it struck him on the feet, and it struck him on the shins, and it struck him on the knees, and it struck him on the thighs, and in the back, and in the ribs, so that after a while he didn't know what was happening to him. At last he shouted for the door to be opened

for him, and I promise you that he thought it long enough before he was outside.

SHEILA.—The hand that was in the broom was too

strong for him!

Maybe if Thade had got sight of the one whose hand was in it, he wouldn't have got off so easily as he did. And, look here, Abbie. How could Shiana's money turn into bits of slate, when it wasn't made out of bits of slate?

ABBIE.—How do you know, Kate, of what the man with the horns made it? Surely the world knows

it was not honestly or lawfully he got it.

PEG.—Whatever way he got it, it didn't turn into any little bits of slate, or if it did, they didn't stay in Shiana's pockets. He had them empty enough when he was getting the leather from Grey Dermot. He got the leather, and the wax, and the thread, and he turned toward home; and I promise you that the pride was taken out of him clean.

When he reached home, weary and worn-out and heavy-hearted, and when he saw the chair and the malvogue and the apple-tree, and thought of the three beautiful wishes that had been spoilt, a great bitterness and vexation and trouble of mind came upon him, so that he was not able to taste a grain of meal, nor an apple. He threw himself into the chair, for he was tired, and it was not long till he fell asleep.

The poor fellow spent the night there. When he opened his eyes the day was just breaking. The cold had almost gone through his heart. He was awake for a little time before he thought of the

purse, and of the Black Man, and of all the adventures of the previous day. No sooner did he move than he felt a weight in the pocket of his waist-coat. He put in his hand. What should be there but the purse!

"Now, did any Christian ever see such a thing as that?" said he, and he pulled it out. He put his hand in his breeches' pocket. There were the

two hundred pounds, no more and no less!

"Well!" said he, "if this business hasn't beaten all the wonders I ever saw! It couldn't have been in my possession unknown to me! Search? There never was searching like it! Everything except putting my fingers out through the corners of the pockets! Search! Didn't I search them, if ever pockets were searched! Empty? They were as empty—as empty as ever they were, and that was enough for them. They couldn't be more empty. Well, then, where was the money while I was searching? Where did it go to? Where did it stay while it was away? Who brought it back? What is the meaning of the whole business? That is the question. That is the difficulty. What good is it to me to have a heavy fat purse in my pocket and two hundred pounds in cash, and then for me to go to the fair, and that it should be in the power of every mean little wretch of a thimble-rigger to abuse me before the neighbours, and to call me a 'little yellow shoemaker,' and to reproach me with 'brown patches,' and 'stout awls,' and 'smelly shoes,' and to proclaim it before the whole fair that there wasn't a penny in my pocket? If every man lives up to his bargain, it isn't a child's bargain they usually make. And if that's the bargain about

which the 'virtue of the Holy Things' was laid upon me, it's no great thing. 'It will be as plump the last day as it is now'—upon my word, it'll be no wonder if it is!"

He went on talking to himself like that for a long

time. At last he jumped up.

"I will go now, at once," said he, "and I'll pay Dermot, and I'll bring home some more leather."

He went on straight ahead, and never stopped

until he was in front of Dermot's house.

Dermot was standing between the two doorposts in the same way as he had been the day before. He was accustomed to spend a great deal of his time like that, standing in the doorway, with his shoulder to the doorpost, looking down the road and up the road, by turns.

"Why, Shiana, what's happened to you?" said

Dermot.

"Nothing at all, indeed, Dermot," said he, "but I have come to you with your money. Here it is

for you." And he handed him a pound.

"It wasn't long coming in to you," said Dermot, and he gave a queer look at Shiana, as if he doubted that it was not out of his trade he had got the money.

Shiana understood the look, and he said, "This was promised to me before the fair, and I didn't

get it until to-day."

"Well," said Dermot, "and what need was there for all the hurry? Wouldn't it have done at the end of a week or a fortnight? You are as fagged as if you hadn't lain down on a bed for three nights. Were you out anywhere last night?"

"Out anywhere last night? Why, where should

I be out last night? Indeed I was not. But when I went home from the fair I sat down in my chair and I fell asleep, and I declare to you I stayed there till morning."

"Why then indeed, that's strange! And look you, when you were leaving this house yesterday evening there was no sign of drink on you, and it was quite early in the evening. Where did you stop?"

"Oh, the blessing of God be on the souls of your dead, Dermot, and let me alone. I didn't stop anywhere, but went straight home. It wasn't drink or play that was troubling me, I promise you."

He handed the pound to Dermot, and took the road without more delay, for fear that any further questions would be put to him. He had made up his mind to take three or four pounds' worth more leather, but he was afraid that Dermot would ask who had given him the money. As he was going the road home, his mind and thoughts were much disturbed, and he was turning things over and over, and over and over, trying to make out what had happened to the money on the fair-day.

"If I were to be thinking of it for a year from to-day," said he, "I could never understand what is the meaning of it."

And all the way his left hand never parted from the side of his waistcoat in which the purse was, and he kept his right hand thrust to the elbow in his breeches' pocket, running the gold through his fingers.

SHEILA.—What good did it do him to be running it through his fingers, Peg?

PEG.—I don't know in the world, Sheila, but he was doing it, any way, and he didn't stop doing it until he got home. He felt more in humour for

the meal and for the apples than he had felt the day before, and he ate as much as he wanted of them. He was eating and thinking for a long time. At last he stopped, and struck his knee

with his open hand.

"By the book!" said he, "if Dermot were to see me buy that black horse, there's no knowing where the questions would stop. I should have no chance of escaping him. He is too sharp altogether. When you had given him an excuse and you would think you had done with him, he would just fasten on you all the more firmly. Perhaps, after all, it is best that I didn't buy a horse or a cow. I don't care, since I have the money. That horse would kill me, and then I wouldn't have even the thirteen years. And as I didn't buy the cow, I needn't be looking out for a wife to milk her. Perhaps it is just as well as it is. 'The thing a man would dislike more than death, for all he knows may be his best good-fortune!' I will make these shoes, and then I will go to Dermot and get two pounds' worth, and then four pounds' worth, and so on. Ha! ha! Dermot, well, well, well! The thing will slide on and up unknown to you. Wasn't I a great blockhead not to think of that plan at first? Of course nothing could be worse for me than that the reputation of having money should go out about me suddenly like that. People would say I had stolen it from somebody. But when it is put out by degrees, everybody will think, of course, that I have made it out of my trade."

When he had settled his mind so far, he took another bit of the meal and ate it, and he got another apple and chewed it. Then he drew his leather to

him, and his wax and his thread, and the fine awls and the thick awls and the lasts, and he began to work. He had a habit of always humming while he was working, and this is the tune he used to keep going most of the time:—

Oh, torment and trouble to you,
You bristly hag!
Who have brought on me the hate of the
women
Of Ireland;

You with your two ears
As large as a shovel,
And your great thick lips
For a mouth!

If I were to get from Ruachtach
To the bank of Avonmore
And Mallow away to the north
As a portion with you,

The brown Cledach
And all the cows upon it,
I would not stretch out
My life with you.

CHAPTER VI.

RUMOURS.

ABBIE.—That was a nice humming! But I wonder why he called her a "bristly hag." I suppose she must have had a thin beard, as the old "badger-woman" has.

KATE.—Who said the old "badger-woman" had a

beard?

ABBIE.—Oh, indeed, Kate, she has. I have been near her, and I looked well at her chin, and it's full of great thick long hairs, and they are grey, just like bristles. When she saw me noticing them, she laughed and she rubbed them against my forehead, so that I couldn't help screaming with the tickling.

KATE.—It is a pity she didn't put them in your eyes.

Maybe that would keep you from looking at

people so rudely.

ABBIE.—Why then indeed, upon my word and credit, Kate, she did put them into my eyes! And it was that that set me screaming, and not the tickling. There was one of them that was as big and as long as a thick needle, and it went into my eye, and I promise you I didn't forget it for a while. But I don't know if it will cure me of the rudeness.

KATE.—Hush, Abbie, I was joking. There's no rudeness about you, and there never was. But you have what I have not,—you have patience. Perhaps if I had been there, I would not have been able to keep from giving a look at the

bristles. But listen, Peg; I don't know in the world what was the grudge that thimble-man had against Shiana that he should give him such an out-facing in the middle of the fair, without cause or reason.

PEG.—That was exactly what was puzzling Shiana. He didn't know why anybody should do such a thing. He was often afterwards at the same fair selling shoes, and many a long while he spent watching thimble-men, hoping that he might get a good look at the man who had spoken to him that day, but he didn't. Most likely, if he had, the man's insolence would not have gone unpunished.

KATE.—It is a great pity that it was let go unpunished at first.

PEG.—The thing came too suddenly on Shiana. He hadn't time to think of what he ought to do, especially when he looked at the thimble-man and he was minding his own business, without taking any notice of Shiana's affairs. After a little time, in fact, he did not feel quite sure that it was that man who had spoken at all.

KATE.—Why then indeed, upon my word and credit, that is just what I was thinking myself too, that perhaps it wasn't he.

PEG.—Well, and wouldn't it have been nice work for Shiana to have done, if he had struck the man without having anything against him?

KATE.—Indeed, that's true.

PEG.—A long time afterwards, when Shiana used to be looking for the man, he had determined that if he saw him he would first go and speak to him, and then, when he had discovered from the talk

whether he was the man who had spoken in that way or not, he could either strike him or not strike him.

Nora.—And surely, Peg, it wouldn't be right for him to strike him, whether he had spoken the words or not?

PEG.—Really, Nora, I am not saying that it would; but I am saying that he had determined to do it, whether it was right or not. But it was all the same, for he failed to get a single glimpse of him, at home or abroad. He never got tale or tidings of him, high or low, and at last the whole business went out of his head.

When he had finished the two pair of shoes, although he had not used up the pound's worth of leather, he went and took home two pounds' worth, and then four pounds' worth. Then he engaged two other shoemakers at daily wages, and after a while two others. In a very short time he had acquired a great name in the country for the goodness and cheapness of his shoes, and it was to him that all the best workmen used to come, because he used to feed them best and pay them best. And it was to him that the richest and highest people used to come to buy shoes, because it was his shoes that were of the best material and of the neatest make. It was to him the poor used to come, who had not the money handy for the shoes, because he used to give them fine long credit, and when the time came for payment and the debts were not paid, he was not hard about claiming them. Shoemakers who had not money to buy leather used often to come to him and ask him to lend them a little money so that they could be working and earning something instead of being

quite idle. There was no fear of his ever refusing any one of them, and there was many a poor shoemaker with a large family, who would have often been without food for his children or a pig at his door, but for Shiana.

When he was going to Mass on a Sunday or holy day, or when he was going to a fair or market to sell shoes, there was many a man that would come to him on the road and call him aside, saying, "Will you excuse me, Shiana—I would have those two pounds for you, but that I failed to sell the pig." Or, "Indeed, Shiana, I am ashamed to come to talk to you, when I haven't a halfpenny of your money yet for you; but my son was taken ill, and he was twenty-one days in bed before the crisis came, and I had to keep two nurses taking care of him all that time."

It was so with them all, each making his own poor mouth, and Shiana had no answer for them but "Never mind," or "It doesn't matter a pin," or "Take your time"—and I promise you that they did take it.

There was just one man to whom Shiana gave a refusal. And indeed the way he came was in a suit of broadcloth, and he was broad and strong and healthy, and fine and rosy and fat, and his hands were beautifully soft and white and supple, without a sign of work or craft upon them. And here is how he spoke:—

"Indeed, Shiana," said he, "I feel annoyed and humiliated that such a thing should overtake me alive as that I should have to come to you to ask a loan of money. But a hundred pounds would be a great convenience to me now, and from what I hear, it will be no great trouble to you to give it to me.

It is not every day that a man like me will come to ask it of you."

"I am sorry that I have not a hundred pounds

handy now to give you," said Shiana.

The gentleman stopped and looked at Shiana. He had never expected that answer. He looked at Shiana as he would look at some extraordinary animal. Shiana looked him steadily in the eyes. People used to say that Shiana had a very wild look when anything made him angry, and there was hardly anyone who would not cower before it. That gentleman cowered before it. He looked down at the ground, and then he looked out at the door, and after a while he looked again at Shiana, and there was Shiana laughing at him.

"Oh," said he, "fifty pounds would do."

"I am sorry," said Shiana, "that I have not fifty pounds handy to give you."

That took the pride out of him altogether.

"Give me ten pounds," said he.

"I will not," said Shiana.

"You wouldn't refuse me one pound," said he.

"You won't get it," said Shiana.

"Look here, Shiana," said he, "the dear knows I have not eaten food or taken a drink since yesterday morning. It would be a great charity for you to give me something to eat."

That look came into Shiana's eyes. He pointed

his finger toward the door.

"Take the road," he said, "you idle vagabond!"

He almost sprang out at the door.

Sheila.—And whisper, Peg. I wonder what put that evil look in Shiana's eyes. He wasn't like that always.

PEG.—That is exactly what was surprising all the neighbours, Sheila. They noticed Shiana altering very much in his disposition and mind. He seldom used to speak except when he was spoken to, and he hardly ever laughed. He dropped his humming altogether. People could not remember when they had heard the "bristly hag" dispraised. When he used to be working with the men, there was nothing to be heard from him from morning till night but his long heavy breathing, the tapping of the little hammer, and the drawing and tightening of the waxed thread. The men thought it was greed for money that moved him, seeing that he used to work so hard. But then they would wonder that he used to part with it so easily, lending it to people who had no chance of ever paying it back, and giving it to them without security or bond. When he used not to speak, neither did they speak, and there was nothing to be heard from them but the long heavy breathing and the tapping of the little hammers and the drawing and the tightening of the waxed thread. You would think if you saw them that they were working for a wager. When people used to pass by the house they used to stop and listen to the sounds of the work. And then, when they went on their way they used to say to each other, "It's little wonder Shiana has money! We never saw workmen working so hard. He feeds them well and he pays them well, but indeed he gets the work out of them, if ever anybody did!"

But both the workmen and the neighbours failed completely to reconcile the two sides of the story, or to answer the question: What caused Shiana to work so hard to make money, and then to part with it so readily?

Matters went on in that way for three years. Then. by whatever means the report got abroad, it was spread throughout the district that Shiana was going to be married. It was understood that the match was made and that the day was fixed. All the beggars and tramps in the country-side were preparing for it. There was just one thing about the business that was rather strange. No two people were agreed as to who was to be the bride. The townspeople had settled that it was Grey Dermot's daughter. Dermot himself heard this report repeated so often that he believed every word of it, and I promise you he was well satisfied in his mind. He knew Shiana was rich and that he did not care at all for money, and so he thought. of course, that there would be no talk of a fortune. There was only one thing troubling him. The public had fixed a day for the marriage. That day was only a week off, but Shiana had never yet come to have any talk with him.

"I suppose," said Dermot to himself, "that he would come, if it were not that he does not mean to ask for any fortune with Sive. Very good. She is a fine handsome woman. A quiet sensible girl-if nothing happens to make her angry. 'A wife is better than a fortune.' Whoever was the first to say that had great wisdom! All the world can't

beat a proverb."

Two days more passed and there was neither tale nor tidings of Shiana. Dermot was very much surprised. His daughter Sive was twice as much surprised.

"Go up," said she to her father, "and speak to that man, as he is so wanting in understanding as not to come himself to speak to you-or to me."

Dermot marched up. When he was getting near Shiana's house he heard the work going on as hard as if all the world were in want of shoes and there was nobody to make them but Shiana and his men.

He walked in to where they were.

"God save all here!" said he.

"God and Mary to you!" said Shiana.

"Well now indeed, Dermot," said one of the men, "it is high time for you. There are pains in my eyes from looking sideways down that pathway for the past week, thinking from time to time that I would

see you coming."

"That's a funny thing," said Dermot, "when I have pains in my eyes and in my shoulder from standing in the doorway with my shoulder to the doorpost, so that a crow couldn't come down over the rise in the road unknown to me, and every man that came into my sight I was quite sure it must be Shiana, until he came close to me."

"I!" said Shiana.

"You, to be sure!" said Dermot. "Isn't it in the mouth of the three congregations that you and my Sive are to be married next Tuesday? And don't you think it's right for me to expect that there should be some little talk between us before Tuesday comes?"

"You are mistaken, Dermot," said one of the men.

"It is not to your Sive he is to be married, but to 'Short Mary,' John Kittach's daughter, to the west; and by the same token, John has gone off to Cork to get a supply of provisions and drinks for the wedding. And I fancy his relatives have been invited for Tuesday."

¹ ceacac, left-handede

"You are mistaken, Michael," said another man.

"It is not to Short Mary he is to be married, but to the Maid of the Liss here below. There are tailors and dressmakers at work there these three days, and as I was coming up this morning I saw the beggars

gathering there already."

"Did anyone ever see the like of you all?" said a fourth man. "Were you at Mass on Sunday, Michael? If you were, it would be hard for you not to hear what was in everybody's mouth—that is, that Shiana was to be married on Tuesday next to Nora of the Causeway. And it was there the beggars were going, and not to the Liss. I'll bet that Shiana himself will say that I am right."

Shiana looked from one to another of them. The ugly look and the hostile stare were in his eyes. He

was angry, but he crushed the anger down.

"Go away home, Dermot," said he, "and have sense. I have no notion of marrying, and I don't think I shall have, yet awhile."

He bent his head and went on with his work. Not another word was spoken. Dermot slipped out, feeling thoroughly disgusted with himself.

He arrived home.

"Well?" said Sive.

- "Well, indeed!" said Dermot.
- "What's the news?" said Sive.
- "Queer news," said Dermot. "The whole country, for seven years from now, will be doing nothing but making fun of the two of us, of you and of me."

"Why, how is that?" said Sive.

"Because we have deserved it," said Dermot. And she failed to get any more talk out of him.

CHAPTER VII.

" SHORT MARY."

When the men went home, each to his own lodging, I promise you there was a great tale to tell in every house. The neighbours came in to spend the evening. Each shoemaker gave his own version of Dermot's visit and of Shiana's answer. Each neighbour carried home with him his own way of repeating the story. There never was such fun over anything, before or since, about the place. By the time Sunday came there was not a person, old or young, in the three congregations that had not the whole story, and three times as much more added to it. You would see the people on the roads, in threes, or fours, or tens, telling the story or asking about it, and staggering on their feet with fun and laughter. Dermot was right. The whole country was making game of the pair.

Short Mary and Nora of the Causeway and the Maid of the Liss were all very thankful and well pleased in their minds at their having escaped so well. They would not have escaped but for Dermot's visit being so absurd as it was, and Dermot himself having the reputation of being so very sharp-witted.

When people had had enough of the fun about Dermot and Sive, they had another thing to discuss. All the men had heard Shiana say that he had no notion of marrying, and would not have, yet awhile. Not one of them made a change of a word in that part of the story. Short Mary heard it. Nora of the Causeway heard it. The Maid of the Liss heard it. Everybody heard it, and there was not

one of those who heard it that did not remember it correctly. That was the question among them. That was the difficulty. What made Shiana say that he had no notion of marrying, and would not have for a while?

There would not be a batch of men working in a field, nor a few people walking on the road, nor a little gathering going to a neighbour's house in the evening, nor a company going to have a drink, but that the first question that would start up among them would be, "Man, did you hear what Grey Dermot did? Oh, upon my word and credit, he walked straight up to Shiana's house, and he wanted, right or wrong, to bring Shiana down with him by the poll of his head and marry him there and then, to Sive, in spite of his back teeth! Did anyone ever see the like?"

Then, by-and-bye, somebody else would say, "And what did Shiana say?" He would get as an answer, "Shiana told him to go home and have sense, that he had no notion of marrying, and that he wouldn't have, yet awhile."

Then the question would arise, "What made Shiana say such a thing, while matches were being made for him all over the country as thick as gravel?"

When Shiana himself said the words, he let out more of his mind than he wished to let out, but he was angry, and Dermot had done the thing in such a blundering way that he could not keep patience with him. When they were all gone home for the night, and he was alone, sitting in the soogaun chair, the whole affair was running through his mind in this way:—

"In the mouth of the three congregations!

It

wasn't I that put it into the mouth of the three con-The old fool! He will be in the mouth gregations. of the three congregations now-himself and Sive. Humph !- I am sorry there should have been any mention of Short Mary's name. But how can I help it? Now I think of it, I wonder why she is called Short Mary, when she is as tall as any woman coming to the congregation. It is no wonder she should be. John Kittach himself is a fine big powerful man. He has the name of being the strongest man of his race, and the MacCarthys are strong men. She is a handsome woman! It is no mistake to call her a quiet, sensible girl. Three years ago there was no fear of her name being mentioned together with mine.

"It would be a queer thing for me to do, to marry, when I have only ten years now. They were not long going, those three years. There won't be much delay in three years more to follow them. There's half the time gone then. 'Won't it be soon enough for you to ask that question,' said he, 'when we are starting?' What good would it be for me to ask it then? He made me swear by the virtue of the Holy Things. I suppose there is no escape for me. Things are in a queer way for me. I working and making money as thick as gravel, and what am I getting by it? To many a poor man have I given help. Their gratitude is great—on their lips. I don't know if there is much of it in their hearts. I wonder if they are any the better of what I have given them. There are some of them of whom I think that it would have been better for them if they had never seen a halfpenny of it. There are some of them who, if the time were past and I were gone, would not grieve for me long.

They would think then that it was certain that they

need never pay. That is their gratitude.

"Whoever gets her will have a good wife. I often heard that a wife was better than a fortune There is both wife and fortune there.—It would be a queer thing for me to do, to marry, having only ten years now. She would be in a nice way then—and her children, if she had any. Bad manners to it for money and for a purse and for a bargain! I had an easy mind until they came my way."

That is the way he spent the night. He went out at daybreak, and up the hill. He sat for a while on the top of a big rock called the Gamblers' Rock.

When the day cleared and the sun rose, and he looked round him at the beautiful view to be seen from the rock, the gloom rose from his heart and a great peace came upon his mind.

ABBIE.—Why indeed, Peg, I would feel inclined to say to him what "Kate Music" said to her husband, when she took the mouse out of the basin of milk for him.

Nora.—What did she say to him, Abbie?

ABBIE.—Well, he had a batch of workmen, and they were sitting down to dinner, and there was a big table of potatoes before them, and there was a basin of thick milk in front of each man. The man of the house took his own basin, and the first mouthful he took out of it he laid bare a mouse in it. He beckoned to Kate, and showed her the mouse. That did not put her about in the least. She took the basin in her left hand, and went over to the door. She put her right hand into the basin and lifted the mouse out of it and flung it out at the door; and then she put the

same basin, with the same milk in it, down before her husband. When he saw what she had done, he got up from the table in a rage and went out. As he was going out, she said, "Well, indeed, it is hard to please people! Milk with a mouse in it won't do, nor milk with a mouse out of it!"

KATE.—My hand to you, Kate Music! You never failed to make a blunder! What did her husband say, Abbie?

ABBIE.—Why, what could the man say? That was just the way with Shiana. When he had no money he was not satisfied, and then when he had the purse, and leave to draw out of it, he was not satisfied either. He was as hard to please as Kate Music's husband.

KATE.—Why, see now, Abbie, you don't rightly understand the thing. When Shiana was getting the purse he didn't give himself time to consider the condition. Then when the bargain was made, and confirmed by the virtue of the Holy Things, he had leisure enough for reflection. The time was going at a gallop, and he had never got an answer to that question of his "Where shall we go then?" How cunningly the Black Man said to him: "Won't it be time enough for you to ask that question when we are starting?" He didn't understand it in time.

ABBIE.—Indeed then, Kate, I am afraid that he understood it right well from the beginning, but he was so anxious for the purse that he didn't care. And I think the Black Man knew that he understood it when he said to him, "You are sharp-witted." It's my opinion that the pair understood each other right well.

- KATE.—'It is after it is done that every act is understood,' Abbie. All the world can't beat a proverb.
- Nora—Whatever way he understood the thing when he was getting the purse, I suppose he understood it better when the whole country was marrying him without his knowledge to four different women, while he himself knew that there were only ten years between him and the fulfilment of the bargain he had made with the Black Man. If he had only looked before him when the angel gave him the warning! If I had been in his place, the three wishes I would have asked for would have been, plenty of money in this world, a long life in happiness, and the eternal life after it. Then he could have married Short Mary, or the Maid of the Liss—or even Sive—if he liked, independently of the Black Man and his tricks.

Sheila—How do you know, Nora, that he wouldn't have chosen Nora of the Causeway?

NORA—I think that "Sheila" was the name of the Maid of the Liss, and that she was the one he liked best.

- PEG.—Whichever of them he liked best, Nora, I think he was sorry enough that he did not do as you would have done.
- Nora.—He acted in a most absurd and blundering way. It wouldn't be easy for him to ask three wishes more useless than the three that he asked for. I don't know in the world what came over him. He was to have three wishes at his own choice and judgment, and he could have them without any condition or impediment, and he must needs go and trample them under foot,

and then accept a purse on the hardest condition that ever was put on any man. It was no wonder that his night's sleep was gone from him, and that an ugly look was coming in his eyes!

SHEILA.—And was it that that put the ugly look in his eyes? Oh, I understand it now. I shouldn't be surprised if he were to drown himself, with

such a fate hanging over him.

PEG.—I dare say he might have done something of the kind, but that he wouldn't give the Black Man the satisfaction of it. He often used to say to himself, "The thirteen years are mine in spite of him, and I will spend them to the very end."

Nor.—It is a pity he didn't stay as he was at the beginning, trusting to his apple-tree and his

malvogue and his soogaun chair.

ABBIE.—But if he had stayed like that, Nora, there would have been no lady looking his way.

Nora.—Well, perhaps it might have been just as well for him. I don't see any "gentility" in a lot of them except pride and standoffishness and contempt of others.

ABBIE.—Ah, Nora, I know what causes that sometimes. When they see little girls who are not ladies and who are better-looking than themselves, they are jealous. I am afraid if I were a lady I should be jealous of you.

Nora.—Oh, why, Abbie?

ABBIE.—Ask Sheila why.

SHEILA.—No, she won't ask Sheila why. Let Abbie tell it herself now, since she has drawn the question on her.

Peg.—Abbie is a great girl for making fun, Nora, but she is right sometimes.

KATE.—I'm sure it isn't right for a girl who is a lady to be jealous or overbearing, even if it should please God to give the most angelic beauty to a humble little girl.

SHEILA.—I wonder, Peg, if the people who are ugly in this world will be beautiful in Heaven?

Peg.—Oh, Sheila dear, nobody will be ugly in Heaven, but everyone will be more beautiful and gracious than the most beautiful person that a human eye ever saw in this world,

SHEILA.—Then they won't need to be jealous or

proud.

Peg.—There won't be any jealousy or pride there, Sheila, any more than there will be any other

ugly thing.

SHEILA.—Wasn't it a pity Shiana didn't take the angel's advice, instead of thinking about his malvogue and his soogaun chair and his apple-tree and about the dalteens that used to play tricks upon him?

PEG.—Well, you see, he didn't. But I dare say if he had got a second chance he would have taken it. He did not get a second chance. He had made his bargain. He had made it by the virtue of the Holy Things, and he had to stand to it. He knew right well that as soon as the last day of the thirteen years should come, the claimant would come, and that there would be no chance of hiding from him.

When he had spent a good while sitting on the Gamblers' Rock, looking about him at the beautiful

view, he continued his reflections:-

"How much my case was troubling him! He heard me say that I was 'without food or drink or

money.' Many a one beside me has been without food or drink or money, and how well he let them go by him !- 'The bargain is not made yet,' said he. 'Let it be a bargain,' said I. He wouldn't be satisfied with that. He must needs make the bonds very tight. 'By the virtue of the Holy Things!' said he. 'By the virtue of the Holy Things,' said I. There is no doubt but I said it. I can't get out of it. But indeed I wouldn't have said it but for the way he lured me. I never saw with my eyes a more beautiful colour than there was on that handful of gold that he showed me. An intense desire for it came upon me. gave me a hundred pounds in exchange for a single shilling. 'I would give you that,' said he, 'and seven hundred, if I could only destroy the good done by that shilling.' He admitted that its good could not be destroyed, because I had given it for the Saviour's sake. Destroy the good of it! Why destroy it? Where was the use? If he had failed to destroy the good of that shilling, ought not I to be able to do further good which he would be unable to destroy? I have the purse. It would be great fun to use his own money to provoke and annoy him. By the deer, that is just what I'll do! He would give seven hundred pounds to destroy the good of a single shilling. I have ten years. Many a shilling and penny and pound I shall be able to give for the Saviour's sake in the course of ten years. He will have hard work trying to spoil all the good. So now! I shall have the upper hand of him in that matter at least. I'll get music out of the purse yet, even if it is not in the way in which I thought of doing it at first. The rascal of a thief!"

It was getting well on in the morning when he had

finished his reflections and had made up his mind. He stood up and looked round him at the beautiful prospect.

"I have ten years at all events," said he, and he

turned his face homeward.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EVICTION.

When Shiana came near the house he heard the men talking loudly as if they were discussing something important. When he came in they stopped. He asked them what they were talking about. They were surprised at his asking, for he did not usually take any interest in their conversation.

"It is," said one of them, "that Michael's people

are in trouble this morning."

Shiana looked about him.

"And where is Michael," said he.

"He stayed at home," said the man who had spoken. "There is a bailiff coming there to demand rent, and I don't think they have a halfpenny of money under the roof of the house."

All Shiana did was to turn round and go out at the

door.

Michael's mother was a widow. He went straight to the widow's house. He arrived before the bailiff, and only just before him. The widow welcomed him.

"What does he want?" said Shiana.

"The rent," said she.

"How much is it?" said he.

"Twenty pounds," said she.

"Here," said he. "Michael gets a pound a week. There are twenty pounds of his wages for you beforehand."

"Oh," said she, "why would you give me so much money in advance?"

"For the Saviour's sake," said he.

"May the Saviour repay you for it," said she.

He was gone before she had time to say any more.

The bailiff came in. He had a white hat on. He had puffy cheeks, and an overbearing mouth, a thick nose and a fat neck. He had a sheep's-grey frieze coat on, and he had a big stomach and a broad back and stout calves. He had a heavy blackthorn stick in his hand, and he was grunting and puffing.

"Rent or possession, woman of the house," said

he.

Abbie.—Oh, upon my word and credit, Peg, I never saw anyone that was so exactly like "John of the Fair" as he!

Peg.—And isn't John of the Fair a bailiff, Abbie? Abbie.—Why, he is, to be sure.

PEG.—What more about it then?

"Rent or possession, woman of the house," said he, just as John of the Fair would say it.

She called her son.

"Here, Michael," said she, "count that, and give it to this good man."

Michael opened his eyes, for he had not seen Shiana give the money to his mother. And the bailiff opened his eyes, because he had never expected that there would be a halfpenny of money in the house. He took the rent and went off, and he was very much vexed and angered, for he had promised the place that very morning to somebody else, for a good bribe.

"There!" said Shiana, as he went home, "if it gave him work to do to destroy the good of my shilling, let him have more work now to destroy the good of the twenty pounds. I think it will be no harm for me to leave that business between himself and the widow."

He arrived home and went to work. Very soon Michael was in after him, and he went to work. No one spoke for the rest of the day, and nothing was to be heard there but the soft whistling of the men, the long, heavy breathing of Shiana, the tapping of the little hammers, and the drawing and tightening of the waxed thread.

When Michael went home that night, his mother told him what Shiana had said when he was giving her the money, that he said it was for the Saviour's sake he was giving it to her. They were both surprised, for they had never thought there was much piety about Shiana.

Michael went out in the evening and he told it to another boy. It was not long before it was spread far and wide all over the district. Grey Dermot heard it. The bailiff heard it. Sive heard it.

- "Dad," said Sive, "did you hear what Shiana did lately?"
 - "No, I didn't, and I don't care."
 - "Well, dad, we thought he had sense."
 - "Why, what has he done?" said Dermot.
- "He has done a silly thing,—what he never failed to do," said she.

"And what is the last silly thing he has done?" said Dermot.

"It is," said she, "to go and give a hundred pounds of money to that mean little spiritless creature above, lame Michael's mother."

"Nonsense, Sive, don't you believe it."

"Oh, indeed, dad, there isn't a word of untruth in it. It was the bailiff himself that told me. I don't know where he got all the money. And, indeed, what good is it for him to have money if that's the way he means to let it go from him? You did well to break off the match that time, I should never have got over the regret of it if I had been married to a fool."

"Indeed, Sive," said Dermot, "it wasn't I that broke it off."

"And goodness, man, who else broke it off but you? Surely you are not going to say that it was Shiana that broke it off!"

"Really, my dear, I don't think anybody broke it. It wasn't there to break," said Dermot.

"It wasn't there to break!" said she. "It wasn't, and it won't be! You are a nice sort of man! It wasn't there to break! That is a nice way for you to talk. There are all your neighbours who have their children settled in life, and what have you done? It wasn't there to break! It was not, and it never will be!"

And then she began to cry.

Dermot got up, and walked down to the door and put his shoulder against the doorpost, and looked down the road, and then looked up the road.

KATE.—If I had been in Dermot's place, I would

have said to her, "May your tears bring you no relief." 1

Peg.—I don't know, Kate. Perhaps if you were in Dermot's place you couldn't have done a better thing than he did. Most likely he knew best what he ought to do.

KATE.—The bold thing! I hate her.

ABBIE.—Did Short Mary hear of it, Peg?

PEG.—The next Sunday she was talking to Michael's mother, and she got the account of the whole thing exactly as it had happened. She was very glad when she heard that he had given the money for the Saviour's sake.

"And," said she, "I hope, now, that Michael will earn that money as honestly as if he had not got it beforehand."

"Why then indeed," said the widow, "that is just the wonder of the whole business. When he was paying the men last night he handed a pound to Michael as usual. 'Oh,' said Michael, 'I am paid already.' 'Take that from me,' said Shiana, and he had to take it."

"Well!" said Short Mary, "they used to say that Shiana had no religion. Let them take that as a sign of it!"

"Religion?" said the widow. "I never saw the like of it. If I were to live a thousand years I could never put out of my head the look he gave me when he was handing me the money. 'For the Saviour's sake,' said he, and when I looked up at him, his two eyes were looking through me, so that a sort of awe came over me that I couldn't describe."

¹ A proverbial expression, used when a person weeps without good cause.

"Hush, don't be silly," said Mary. "What need was there for fear?"

"Oh, let me alone, Mary. I assure you, if I had looked into his eyes again I should have fallen down," said the widow.

"Hannah," said Mary.

"Yes, Mary," said the widow.

"I have a secret to tell you," said she, and there was a tremor in her limbs and in her voice.

"Do not hesitate, Mary," said Hannah. "I will keep your secret, if my life were to depend upon it."

"I know well that you will, Hannah, but there is more for you to do for me than to keep my secret."

She stopped. Hannah did not speak.

"During part of my life, Hannah," said she, "I thought I would never marry."

"There isn't a very long part of your life spent

yet," said Hannah.

"Short as it is, it has been full of grief lately," said Mary.

"I don't see that you have much cause for grief,"

said Hannah.

"My heart is wrung with grief," said she.

Then she spoke in a whisper to Hannah, and they spent a long time whispering. When they had finished whispering Mary went home, and Hannah went to bed. But not a wink of sleep fell upon either Mary or Hannah that night.

When Hannah got up in the morning she was very tired. When she meant to put her cap on her head she put it into her pocket. When she meant to put her shoe on her foot, she put it into the fire, as she would put a sod of turf. When she knelt down to say her prayers, she could not say a single word

correctly, except "May God direct me to do what is right! May God and Mary, His Mother, direct me to do what is right!" When Michael wanted his breakfast, the food was not ready for him. When it was put before him, it was only half cooked. He did not pretend to notice anything, but ate the food as well as he could.

"There is something the matter with my mother," said he to himself. "I don't know in the world what is coming over her. Surely it cannot be that that bailiff would be coming again? Mother," said he, "there is something troubling you. Had the bailiff any further claim to make that day?"

"Ach, no, Michael, not as much as a halfpenny. There isn't a bit wrong with me except that I didn't

sleep much last night."

"The best thing you could do now, mother," said Michael, "would be to go and sleep for a bit."

"It is a bad thing to sleep in broad daylight, Michael," said she. "It is better for one to bear with it, if possible, so as to sleep well at night."

Michael went away up to Shiana's house, and set to at his work. He had not made two stitches when in came his mother after him. He raised his head and looked at her. Shiana raised his head and looked at her.

"Shiana," said she, "if you please, I would like to speak a word with you alone."

"Michael," said Shiana, "perhaps you wouldn't mind walking out there for a little while."

Michael walked out and put his back against a fence.

"I don't know in the world," said he to himself,

"what is coming over her, or what is this important business she has on hand."

There was a furze bush near him. He saw on the bush a little bee caught in a spider's web. The spider jumped out from the place where he was hiding, and tried to catch the little bee. When the bee saw him coming the fright put double strength into her, and she broke the thread and flew off.

SHEILA.—Oh, indeed, Peg, I saw a spider do a thing like that, but it wasn't a bee that was in the web, but a fly. And the spider caught the fly by the small of the back, and I tell you it was no good for her to wriggle her legs or to struggle. He kept his hold till she was quiet enough. And then if you were to see how he rolled her up in the web, and how he carried her in with him!

ABBIE.—I suppose he made bacon of her.

Sheila.—He carried her off, anyway.

PEG.—Michael's spider didn't carry the bee off, for she flew away from him. And when Michael thought the little while was spent he returned to the house. When he was going up to the door he heard Shiana saying these words:—

"It would be better for her to die the worst death that ever came to a human being, and to die it seven times over, than that I should marry her!"

Michael turned and made off before he heard any more. But even so, he had no sooner reached the furze bush again than he was overcome by anger.

"This is nice work," said he to himself. "It is a disgusting business for my mother to be coming here making a match for Grey Dermot's Sive! Wait till I get home to-night!" At that moment he saw his mother coming to him, with a face as white as death. He sprang to meet her.

"Why, mother," he said, "what's wrong with

you?"

"Hush, hush, my son!" she said in a whisper.
"There's nothing wrong with me. Go away in to

your work. The other men are just coming."

Michael went in. The door was wide open, and not a human being was in before him. Shiana's place was empty. Michael sat down and drew his work to him. The men came one by one. The work went on as usual. Shiana did not return that day.

SHEILA.—Whisper, Peg; surely Hannah wasn't

match-making for Sive?

PEG.—What then, Sheila dear?

Sheila.—For Short Mary, I'll be bound. And I should think that if Michael had had any sense he would have understood that.

- ABBIE.—And how do you know, Sheila, that it was for Short Mary she was making the match, or how do you know she was match-making at all?
- SHEILA.—Oh, indeed, I have very little doubt about it. What did she and Short Mary spend the night whispering about? What took the night's sleep away from both of them? What was the secret that Short Mary told her? I know very well what they were about, I promise you.

PEG.—It seems to me, Sheila, that you are not far from the truth, and that you are much quicker

to see it than Michael.

CHAPTER IX

MATCHMAKING

Shiana did not return home that day, and he did not return that night.

Michael stayed to take care of the place. He was very much surprised when he found that Shiana did not come. He spent the night in the soogaun chair. From time to time he thought Shiana was coming in at the door. Three times he jumped up and went to the door. He thought he heard a man's footstep each time, and he could have sworn that it was Shiana. The last time he thought he saw Shiana himself coming to the door, and he moved his lips to speak to him, but when he looked more carefully there was nobody there. He did not go to the door again. He stayed in the chair near the fire. He put down a sod of turf now and again. He was there ever so long. He thought it impossible for any night to be so long. He felt a dismal loneliness and a quaking fear and dread, yet that did not prevent him from having a nod of sleep from time to time. Once a heavier nod than usual fell upon him, and he saw the house full of little black people all round him, all of them coming at him with hostile intent, with one little gentleman among them who was protecting him from them. One of them slipped in behind the gentleman and made a drive at Michael, showing his teeth. Michael started out of his sleep. Every drop of sweat upon him was as big as a whortleberry, and he was trembling all over.

"Mary of the miracles!" said he, "what shall I do? Or what has happened to the night that it is so long, or what has happened to Shiana, or what is keeping him? If he wants to make a match with Sive, should not the day be long enough to make it, without spending the night out like this? He is a dark man. It is hard to be up to him. He said it would be better for her to be dead than that he should marry her, and there he is doing his best to marry her. I don't know in the world why it should be better for her to be dead than that he should marry her. I should think it would be better for him to be dead than that Sive should marry him. I wouldn't marry her for all Shiana's money and her own and her father's all put together; not I!"

At that moment he noticed a light like the daybreak. That gave him great courage. But after a while what rose was the moon. When he saw the moonlight shining in through the window and over upon the mantel-piece where the malvogue was hanging, and no ray of daylight coming, things seemed so black to him that he lost heart completely, and if he had not been too frightened he would have begun to cry. When the light fell fair upon the malvogue it made it look like a human head. Michael thought he had never seen anything so like the head of the hag in the Fenian tale, who had her two furthest back teeth for two crutches. When he had been looking at it for some time the eyes moved, and the lips opened as if it were going to speak. Michael knew it was only the malvogue, but all the same he shuddered and his hair stood on end, and cold shivers ran down his backbone. He had to shut his eyes so as not to look at those eyes

moving. Soon he had to open them again for very fear and terror. At last a cloud came over the moon, and the malvogue was brought back to its own shape. It was a great relief. Michael thanked God fervently, you may be sure, and he must have fallen at once into a sound sleep, for the next thing he was aware of was the sun shining on the malvogue instead of the moon, the work going on around him, the soft whistling of the men, the tapping of the little hammers, and the drawing and tightening of the waxed thread. He looked over at Shiana's place. Shiana himself was there, working as hard and as diligently as if he could get no supper till that shoe was sold.

Michael stood up and looked across at his own seat.

"Michael," said Shiana, "go you home and have something to eat, and take another sleep. You have earned this day's wages for last night. You need not come to work till to-morrow morning."

As he spoke he looked at Michael, and in spite of the sleep in Michael's eyes, he noticed the look. Shiana looked ten years older than he had looked the day before. Michael went away home, but that look did not leave his memory.

"There is some terrible trouble upon him," he said to himself. "I must tell my mother of it and consult with her as to what should be done."

He reached the house, but when he did, there was neither tale nor tidings of his mother there. There was not a living Christian there. He searched all round the house. He called her. It was no use.

"Well, well, well," said he, "did anybody ever see the like? As sure as there is a ferrule on a beggar's stick, she has gone down to Grey Dermot's

house to finish the match. And what shall I do? What in the world shall I do? For all the gold in the universe I wouldn't wish Shiana to be married to that scourge of a woman. Oh, oh, oh! what shall I do at all? I thought my mother had sense, and now I am sure she hasn't an atom, to take such a match as that in hand. There is nothing for me to do but just one thing, to go away down this very minute, and break off this match before it is too late. The bold, barefaced, proud thing! Humph! 'Tis little wonder he has an aged, worn look! I don't know in all the world what hold they have got over him. Surely it isn't possible that he can have put himself under any bond or promise, and that they are now trying to get money out of him? We were all making game of Dermot that day that he went up. Perhaps he knew what he was about. 'There is not a ghost nor a pooka that does not know his own business himself.' And see now. Shiana did not say, 'I won't marry her,' but 'I have no notion of marrying.' Perhaps it may not come so easily to me to break off the match as I thought it would.—And see too, here am I weighing and balancing, while, perhaps, the match is being finished by my mother. May she not be rewarded for her trouble! How very neighbourly she is!"

He was a field's length away from the house before he had finished that last reflection, as he ran straight down to Grey Dermot's house, getting over the ground as fast as his lame leg could go. It was not long till he arrived, panting, in front of Dermot's house.

Dermot was not at the door yet. It was too early in the day. Michael stood out opposite the door.

"Mother!" he called, at the top of his voice. Sive put her head out at the door, chewing a mouthful of bread.

"Mother!" Michael called again. "Come out here and come along home at once. You have something else to do than to be coming here like a little dog trotting through the mud for them. If they have a match to make, let them make it themselves or leave it alone."

Sive swallowed the bit that was in her mouth.

"Confound you, you cripple!" said she. "What's

wrong with you now?"

"Cripple, indeed?" said Michael. "There is enough, and double enough, wrong with me. You were not satisfied with having your own name and your father's name in the mouths of the people, without dragging my mother into your business. But I'll take right good care that what you failed in yourselves you shall not succeed in by her help. Mother! mother, I say!"

"Be off with you home, you mis-shapen thing, and don't be deaving us! And if you have taken a

drop, go to bed and sleep it off,' said she.

"I tell you I won't stir a foot to leave this place till she comes out," said he. "And I tell you another thing, and believe it from me; that you needn't be tearing off your clothes for rage because Shiana wouldn't marry you. He wouldn't marry you if there were nobody in Ireland but you, you brazen old thing! Mother! mother, I say! Come out here, or I will come in and carry you out."

"Ach, you lame ape, if you don't leave that place and clear out of my sight double quick, I'll put a mark on you that will stick to you as long

as you'll have a crooked leg," said Sive, and she was not speaking but screaming and hopping, with her hair flying about her head.

She went into the house. Michael thought his mother would come out to him. Instead of that, it was Sive who returned, and she had a jug in her hand. She flung the contents of the jug at his face. Luckily for him, he jumped aside. The water that was in the jug flew across the road, with boiling steam coming out of it.

"You villain!" said he, "so, did you mean to murder me?"

"Cut off my ear," said she "but if you had got that you wouldn't come here again to look for your mother, the little sneak!"

At that moment out came Dermot, with his striped night-cap on his head. He took Michael by the shoulder.

"Michael," said he, "you are making some mistake. Your mother is not here, and hasn't been, for I don't know how long."

"Do you tell me so?" said Michael.

"Certainly I do," said Dermot. "Isn't she at home?"

"She wasn't at home when I left home," said Michael.

"Was she at home last night?" said Dermot.

"You are right, indeed," said Michael. "Perhaps she was, and that I left her at home behind me."

Michael was well acquainted with Dermot and his habit of questioning, but he was not going to escape him so easily.

"Stop, Michael" said Dermot. "Don't pretend that you are a fool, because you are not. What put it into your head that she was here matchmaking for Sive and Shiana?"

They were walking slowly and moving away from the house, Michael's face toward home, Sive scolding after them, and Dermot waiting for an answer.

"Why then indeed," said Michael, "it was a curious thing that put it into my head—a dream that I had last night. I thought I was at Shiana's house, alone, sitting in the soogaun chair, with the malvogue opposite me, hanging on the mantel-piece. The malvogue took the shape of a woman's head, and the head spoke to me. I recognised Sive's voice coming out of it. 'Your mother,' said the head, 'is breaking her heart trying to make a match between me and Shiana, but it would be better for Shiana to die the worst death that ever came to a human being than that I should marry him.' With that I started up awake and I sprang up. I called my mother. I got no answer. I thought at once she must be here, and I followed her."

Dermot looked him straight in the eyes. Michael did not flinch. If Dermot had got all Ireland for it he could not have made out whether Michael was telling truth or falsehood. He paused for a good while. At last he said.

"I am afraid, Michael, that your dream was dreamt with your eyes open."

"Why then indeed," said Michael, "that is just the point. I can't make out at this moment, and I don't suppose I shall ever make out, whether I was asleep or awake when I called my mother."

"I would advise you," said Dermot, "whatever dreams you may have, not to come again. Go away

home now, and God give you more sense! You have escaped very well."

They parted.

"Well," said Michael to himself, "I was near playing the mischief. I wonder where in the world my mother spent the night?"

When Michael reached home his mother was there before him. Her face and eyes were swollen from

weeping.

"Mother," said Michael, "where was the wake?"

"What has brought you home, Michael," said she.

"Why," said he, "I stayed to take care of Shiana's house last night, for he himself spent the night somewhere away from home, and then this morning he told me to go home and take a sleep; that I had earned this day's wages after the night."

"Well," said she, "and where have you spent the

day since morning?"

"The day was fine," said he, "and I was neither tired nor sleepy, but indeed I am hungry now, I can

tell you."

She gave him something to eat, and it was well bestowed upon him. He was not long in polishing off a good big dish. When he finished eating he began to talk.

"Mother," said he.

"Yes, Michael," said she.

"You haven't told me where the wake was," said he.

"What kept Shiana away from home all last

night?" said she.

"It wasn't only all last night that he was out of home, but since yesterday morning. When you came out yesterday morning after you had been talking to him—that time that you were ready to faint—I went in, and I didn't find him in the house. He didn't come back all day, and then when the men were going home I stayed to look after the place. I thought every minute that he would be coming in at the door to me. I fell asleep some time during the night, and when I opened my eyes, there they were all working around me, and Shiana there too. And listen, mother—there is some great grief upon him."

"Why, what grief could there be upon him? Hasn't he full and plenty money, and isn't everybody thankful to him?"

"I know one person who isn't a bit too thankful to him," said Michael.

"Who is that," said she.

"That is Dermot's Sive," said he.

"Indeed? and why?" said she.

"Reason enough for her," said he; "because he wouldn't marry her."

"Och, plague to her, the jade! Who would marry her?"

Michael fell back in explosions of laughter. "Jade! Jade! "said he. "Oh, what a pity I didn't think of that name in the morning!"

"And what business would you have had of it in

the morning?" said she.

"In the morning of the other day, I mean," said he, "when I was sent down there for some leather,

and she called me a cripple."

"She called you a cripple!" said his mother.

"If I had been listening to her, I would have told her who were the cripples that belonged to her, and I would have told her another thing that I won't tell

to you now-a thing that would knock the pride out

of her, I promise you."

"And tell me, mother, if that is your opinion of her, why did you go up to Shiana's house yesterday morning to try to make a match between her and Shiana?"

"A match between her and Shiana! Why, I'd drown myself before I would do the like," said she.

"Well, then, why did you say to the Maid of the Liss, that day that she was here, that Shiana wouldn't marry any woman in Ireland but Sive?" said he.

"The Maid of the Liss? Yeh, the silly thing, because I wanted to put some stop to her tongue, and not to have her boasting all over the country that he was going to marry her, and the whole country laughing at her!"

"Why then indeed," said Michael, "and there is no use in your hiding it from me, it was a match

you had on hand yesterday morning."

"And how do you know what I had on hand?"

"Because he spoke loud, and I heard the words: 'It would be better for her to die than that I should marry her.'"

"Listen, Michael," said she, "if you were to get your will in the matter, who is the wife you would

choose for him?"

"Short Mary, of course," said he.

She looked at him sharply.

"And what's the reason," said she, "that you would choose Short Mary for him rather than any other woman of all these that the whole world is marrying to him?"

"In the first place, mother, I have no great opinion of the talk of the whole world. The whole world

doesn't care, so long as it can be talking, how much harm or good its talking does, very often. There's the whole world marrying him to Dermot's Sive. It would be better for him to drown himself. You wouldn't choose the Maid of the Liss for him. I have nothing to say, good, bad, or indifferent, about Nora of the Causeway, but I do say that the whole world is a great fool and I would rather set it down a fool than take its advice."

"And see," said his mother, "there is the whole world marrying him to Short Mary, and how well you find no fault with it."

"A pretty comparison, indeed, Short Mary and the rest of them! Where is the like of Short Mary to be found? Not in the seven parishes. A fine, handsome, noble woman. A wise, sensible, well-brought-up woman, to whom poor and rich alike are grateful. A pious, exemplary woman, whose presence is a benefit to the congregation in which she hears Mass. Good and bad have a reverence for her. If there were two women quarrelling and they saw her coming, they would stop till she had passed them, just as if it were the priest that was going by."

"I wonder," said his mother, "whether, if Sive were quarrelling on the road, she would stop if she

saw Mary coming?"

"Why then, I tell you, on my solemn word, mother, that I saw her do it with my own eyes, and I never was more surprised at anything! I was going east to the Burkes' house with a message. When I was getting near Dermot's house I heard Sive scolding at the top of her voice, giving furious abuse to some neighbour. Who should come westward round the corner house but Short Mary. No sooner did Sive

see her than the scolding ceased. She hung down her head, and went into the house very slowly."

"And isn't it a great wonder." said his mother, "that you haven't bestirred yourself long ago to make

a match for Shiana with her?"

"Why, that is the very point," said he. "I thought that you would have made it long ago, and that you would be far more correct and neat-handed at it than I would be."

"I am afraid," said his mother, "that you are mistaken in that. If there were a match of that sort to be made, I think there is no one who would make it better than yourself, especially as you are so anxious to see it made."

"Surely and certainly, mother," said he, "you are right in that much, at all events. I would rather see that match made than anything in the world. There never was a pair better suited to each other than that pair. It would be hard to outdo Mary's good qualities, and he is as good as she. I would like to make the match, but that I don't know how to set about it."

"How should you set about it but go west to John Kittach himself—to his house—and call the man aside and tell him your mind? Then, if what you say pleases him, he will himself lay the matter before his daughter, and if she likes the match, isn't that half the business done?"

"By the deer," said he, "you are right. I will go now at once."

And off he went.

"May you succeed better than I succeeded!" said she in her own mind.

CHAPTER X

SHIANA'S RENUNCIATION.

The next morning, Shiana and his workmen were working at their very best. The soft whistling of the men, and the tapping of the little hammers, and the drawing and tightening of the waxed thread were going on as hard as if there were not a shoe or a boot being made in any other place on the dry land of Ireland.

"Who is that coming up?" said one of the men. Every man raised his head except Michael.

"John Kittach, surely!" said another man.

Shiana sprang up, and out he went, down to meet John Kittach.

The two spent a good while walking across the field, back and forward, talking and discussing, but they were very far down, so that not one of the men was able to make out a word of the conversation. At last they parted. John Kittach turned west toward his own house. But Shiana, instead of returning to his work, faced east, taking the road to the town.

Michael jumped up and flung away the shoe that he had in his hands, and set off for his own house at a trot.

As soon as he was inside the door, "Mother!" said he, "look here; the match is made!"

"Nonsense!" said she.

"Oh, indeed it is," said he. "John Kittach was up a while ago, and he and Shiana were talking in the field for an hour, and then John Kittach went

home, and Shiana is gone east to the priest's house."

"What were they saying in the field?" said she.

"I don't know," said he. "They were too far away from me."

Michael spoke truth. Shiana had gone to the priest's house, but indeed it was not to complete the match.

"God be with you, Shiana!" said the priest.
"Those shoes you sent me the other day are very comfortable."

"God and Mary be with you, and Patrick, Father! I am very glad you like the shoes. But what brought me here now to talk to you is this, that I am in a

desperate difficulty."

"Indeed, Shiana, I am very sorry to hear that; and not only I, but there is not a person about the country, low or high, rich or poor, who would not be sorry. And indeed—and it is not because you are present that I say it—they would have a good right to be sorry."

"Many is the hard strait I have been through for a good while past, Father; but this is the sharpest grip that ever seized upon my heart. You know

John Kittach's daughter?"

"Certainly, Shiana. Who doesn't know Mary? The most respected young woman in the parish."

"There isn't another like her walking the dew this day, Father, and the way things are with me this long time is, that I would give all I have in the world, and all that I ever had and ever will have, to be able to marry her."

"It is a pity you didn't tell me that long ago, my son. I am aware, in such a way that I am at

liberty to tell it to you now, that Mary is of the same mind concerning you that you are concerning her."

"What is that you are saying, Father?" said Shiana, in great consternation.

"I am saying what I know, and that is that Short Mary's life will be the shorter for it if she is not married to you. She is wasting away before our eyes."

"Oh! God help my soul!" said Shiana. "Things are seven times worse than I had imagined!"

"What, are you out of your mind?" said the priest.

"Oh, I am not out of my mind, Father, nor out of my senses. I am only too well in possession of both. There is a poor woman there to the west, to whom I did a little favour the other day. She came to me, to do me a good turn, as she thought, and she spoke to me about this business. I thought I had given her to understand plainly enough that I had no possible chance of making a match with Short Mary, or with any other woman. I expected that she would have made it known to Mary herself and to her father, and that the matter would be dropped quietly, without trouble to anybody except myself. Instead of that, it appears that there is some unlucky fate driving it along and bringing it to a head in spite of my utmost opposition. The worthy man himself came walking up to see me this morning, to tell me that there was no man in Ireland whom he would rather have as a son-in-law than myself. And when I made it clear to him, as gently as I could, that there was no possibility of my ever marrying, you would think the night had fallen upon him in

the middle of the day. And now, to crown all my misfortunes, I understand from you, Father, that Short Mary herself is suffering in health on account of it. It is a miserable business! It is a miserable and a disastrous business!"

The priest looked at him.

"Shiana," said he, "you are the most extraordinary man I have ever met in any place I have ever been in. When you came in I understood from you that there was just one thing breaking your heart, and that was that you were not able to marry Short Mary. Now, there is her father, with her own full consent, actually bestowing her upon you, and you have nothing to say but that it is a miserable and a disastrous business! What sort of man are you? Or what is it you want?"

"It is no wonder you should ask that question, Father," said Shiana. "It is hard to say what sort of man I am, or what it is that I want. Whatever sort of man I am, I have this to say about this match: it would be better for Short Mary to die the worst death that ever a human being died, than that I should marry her. That is the sort of man I am. If I could come across somebody who would speak to her and make that fact clear to her, and would give her the advice that would be best for her, that is, to put me out of her mind and out of her heart, and to give herself up to God as she has always done—that is what I want. I thought the widow would do it. If she did, she did not succeed in it. I asked John Kittach himself to do it, a while ago. I am afraid the man doesn't know what it would be best for him to do. I came to you, Father, expecting that out of the greatness of your experience and of your insight and of your own good common sense, you would do it, or that you would suggest what it would be best to do in the case."

"I am afraid, Shiana," said the priest, "that you are doing yourself a great injustice. I have known you well for a long time. The poorest day you ever had, I never heard anyone lay a farthing's worth to your charge. The day you were most independent, no one ever said that you wronged a workman, or that you had his labour without paying for it. Poor or rich, I never heard anyone say that he saw you come home drunk, or involved in a quarrel, or forgathering with bad company. No act of theft or plunder can be laid to your charge. No litigation or disputing or quarrelling can be laid to your charge. As for the people who have money of yours, it would be difficult to count them. have never yet heard that you were strict in asking it back from them. I have often heard that some of them were unworthy of much favour being bestowed upon them. I cannot make out-do you see ?-what is the reason that it would be better for her to die than that you should marry her."

"Don't search into the thing any further, Father," said Shiana. "A man knows best himself where the shoe pinches him. I came to ask your advice in order to break this match. Break it, unless you want to set her burning in hell! You have been counting over my good qualities. They are very little to count. Whatever good I have done, it was with one single intention I did it. I did it for the Saviour's sake (not making a boast of it to God!). But what good is it for me, if I do this wrong now?"

"Shiana," said the priest, "I think I understand

the thing at last. You imagine that you would be doing a wrong to Short Mary if you were to marry her. You are refusing to do that wrong, for the sake of justice and right. You are trampling upon your own heart for the Saviour's sake—"

He had no time to say more. No sooner did Shiana hear those words, "for the Saviour's sake," than he was outside the door at one bound, and was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

THE JEWEL.

In the meantime Michael and his mother were hard at work finishing the match. They had almost decided who were to be present at the wedding feast.

They heard someone coming toward the house. They sprang up and stood looking out at the door. Who should go past the door but Shiana! He looked in at the two. He never moved his lips; he only looked at them. You would think that look had chained them to the ground. He did not pause in his walk. He merely looked at them and passed on.

Neither of the two spoke for a long time. At last

the mother spoke.

"Well!" said she. "What do you say to yourself now?"

"I say that it is an extraordinary kind of courtship," said Michael. "A man about to be married,

and he goes to speak to the young woman, after having been to speak to the priest, without a coat or a hat on, with a shoemaker's apron on, wax on his fingers, and his two eyes blazing! The whole business seems to me to be going topsy-turvy!" And he went out, and up to his work. And I can tell you that he had not the same energy in his lame leg going up that he had had when he was coming down.

John Kittach was sitting in the parlour in his own house, near the window. Mary was sitting opposite him. Whom should they see coming to the door but Shiana. John jumped up and went out to

meet him.

"Oh, a thousand welcomes to you, Shiana!" said he.

"Long may you live, John!" said Shiana. "I want to speak a word or two to Mary, if you please."

"There she is within for you. I hope what you have to say to her is better than what you had to say to me this morning."

Shiana went in.

"Oh, a thousand welcomes to you, Shiana!" said

Short Mary.

"Listen, Mary," said he. "I have a secret to tell you. I never thought that I should ever have to tell it to anyone. But I think now that I have not done right in not coming sooner to tell it to you. I am bound before God not to marry."

He stopped. She did not speak for some time.

"The bond is a noble bond," said she at last. "It is a noble bond, and it is a holy bond. If it is a noble bond for you," said she, "it ought to be a noble bond for me. Have no fear," said she. "I will keep your secret. I have twice the heart

I had, or have had for this good while. God gave you a great gift when he put it into your mind to take upon yourself such a bond as that."

"I have done what I came here to do. God's blessing be with you, Mary!" he said. And he went away without speaking to the man of the house.

When he got out into the open air, it seemed to him as if a cloud came down upon the top of his head. The sky grew dark and the ground grew dark. A tightness came upon his chest. He felt as if his heart had gone away out of his breast, and as if the thing he had instead of his heart were like a large heavy stone. He looked eastward toward his own house, and when he did, an intense disgust came to him against the house and against the place, against the tree and the chair and the malvogue, against the work, against all that was above ground there, indoors and out. Instead of facing for home, he faced for the mountain. As he was passing by a neighbour's house two children were playing in the yard, and as soon as they saw him they ran into the house screaming.

"Oh, mammy!" said one of them, "there is a madman out in the yard, and he looked at me!"

Shiana went on up the mountain. When he reached the top he was surprised that he should be so little wearied, although the mountain was so steep. There was a splendid view from the summit. He saw the town, and the fair-green, and Grey Dermot's house, and the widow's house. He saw his own house and John Kittach's house. If the view had been seven times more splendid, it could not have taken the stone out of his chest nor the cloud from over his

head. There was a fine big broad plot of moss at the top of the mountain, as dry as a feather-bed, and so soft that one would sink to the knees in it. He flung himself down on that plot, on his face, and I don't suppose there was another man on the dry land of Ireland that day so crushed and broken in mind as he.

After a while he raised his head and looked west-ward along the side of the mountain. He saw a woman coming from the west. He thought at first that she was some one of the neighbours who was going by the short cut over the mountain. Very soon he observed that she was making straight for the place where he was. He jumped up. Soon he recognized her. It was the barefooted woman!

"The peace of God be with you, Shiana!" said she

"I need that," said he, "if ever any man needed it."

"Look!" said she, opening one of her hands.

"That is the shilling that you gave me for the Saviour's sake."

"I remember it," said he. "Many is the shilling that has passed through my hands since then, and they are a poor consolation to me to-day. I should have more peace in my life if I had never seen them."

"Many is the good thing you have done with them, which you would not have done if you had never seen them," said she.

"Perhaps some evil has been done which would not have been done if I had never seen them," said he.

"The good is greater than the evil," said she.

"This day's evil is greater," said he, "than all the good put together."

"How is that?" said she.

"If I had been content to do my business that day with that shilling and the two others that I had together with it," said he, "I should never have thought of Short Mary nor she of me. I should never have known the sorrow of this day. My heart would not have become like a stone, nor my head like a cloud of mist, nor my mind like a smith's forge-fire, as they are now. My life would not be limited to thirteen years, and the half of that same gone already."

"Look, Shiana!" said she, and she opened her other hand and showed him, in the middle of her palm, a little ball of glass. And that little ball was so brilliant that you could not look straight at it, or it would blind you. And there were little particles of light going from it all round, like the rays out of the sun. There was a little golden band round it, with

a golden chain hanging from the band.
"What is that?" said Shippa as he tries

"What is that?" said Shiana, as he tried to look at the ball, while the strength of the light blinded his eyes.

"It is yours," said she.

"What should make it mine?" said he.

"That is the deed you did this morning," said she; "the noblest deed that has been done in Ireland for a long time."

"Why, what is this noble deed that I have done

this morning?" said he.

"It is," said she, "that you put the best woman in Ireland away from your heart for the Saviour's sake."

"How could I help it?" said he. "How could I do such a wrong to such a woman?"

"You parted from such a woman rather than you would do such a wrong," said she.

With that she went up to him, and she put the chain round his neck and put the jewel into his bosom, over his heart.

"Keep it there," said she, "and in the greatest difficulty that will ever overtake you, and in the hardest strait that will ever come upon you, your courage will never fail."

No sooner did she put her hand into his bosom than he felt as if something exploded in his ears. The mist vanished. Earth and sky became bright. The raging grief went from his mind, and his own heart came back to him.

As soon as the woman had uttered the last word, a kind of white mist rose around her which hid her from his sight, and then the mist drifted away and she was not there.

He looked round him at the sky and at the earth. His mind was as calm as it had ever been in his life. He looked over at the town and over at Grey Dermot's house, eastward at the widow's house, over at his own house, down at John Kittach's house. He gave a little laugh, and turned his face homeward.

ABBIE.—I wonder what Michael said when he saw him coming.

PEG.—Not one of them spoke a word when they saw him coming. Short as the time was since John Kittach had come in the morning, the report had already been spread about the country that Shiana was out of his mind; that the match had been almost made, that Short Mary had refused the marriage, and that Shiana had gone out of his senses; that people had seen him during the day going through the

country in his shirt and trousers; that he had killed a child up at the top of the townland; and that after that he had gone up the mountain like a yellow deer from Mangerton; that he had gone off to the Madmen's Glen, and that it was supposed to be unknown when he would come back; that there was a batch of people in every one of the seven townlands cutting splinters of wood to make torches for the night to go in search of him, and that no doubt he would be found stuck head downwards in some hole and drowned, or in some rock-cave, perished with cold and hunger.

KATE.—No reward to them for their trouble! Perhaps if he were cold and hungry, some of them would think very little of paying him scant

attention.

PEG.—That is true, Kate. But anyhow they hadn't much advantage over Shiana himself in that respect. He was the boy that wouldn't have been much concerned about their labours or their preparations if he had known they were going on—which he did not know.

ABBIE.—It would be great sport if they were to be going all night through bogs and mountains looking for him, while he was snug at home making his shoes, and humming the tune of the "Bristly Hag."

Peg.—I declare to you, Abbie, you have just taken

the word out of my mouth.

No sooner did Shiana reach home, than he sat down to work, and he had not put in three stitches before the "Bristly Hag" was going on as merrily as ever she was, so that the men looked at each other, and Michael drove his awl deep into the eye of his thumb. SHEILA.—Why did he need to do that, Peg?

PEG.—I don't know in the world, Sheila, unless it was that he was thinking of something else while he was driving in the awl.

SHEILA.—I know what he was thinking of.

PEG.—What was it, Sheila?

SHEILA.—He was thinking that he would like to know what Short Mary said when she saw the wax on Shiana's fingers, and the apron he was wearing, and that he was bare-headed; and whether the match was broken off on account of those things.

Peg.—Well, Sheila, if he had all that on his mind it is no wonder that he put the awl through his thumb.

SHEILA.—His mother said he was good at match-making, and I think he was no good at all.

PEG.—Why would you say he was no good, Sheila? SHEILA.—Oh, the blunderer! It would be far better to give him a match to break than a match to make.

ABBIE.—Wait a moment, Sheila dear. Surely nobody living could have made that match. Diarmaun himself could not have made it. Wasn't Shiana's mind made up against it from the beginning? Didn't he say that it would be better for her to be burnt alive than that he should marry her?

SHEILA.—I wonder, Peg, why he said that? Peg.—What do you think yourself, Sheila?

Sheila.—I was thinking it was that he didn't like to leave her behind him a widow when the thirteen years should be up. But then that wouldn't be the same as burning her alive.

PEG.—I think there was more than that in it, Sheila.

The story of the Black Man would have to be told to her from beginning to end, or else it would have to be kept from her from beginning to end. If it were told to her, and then that she were to marry Shiana—as she would—the thought of it would break down her health. She would be wasted away by melancholy, and she would not live long. If it were not told to her, Shiana would have done the most deceitful act that ever a man did. He could not do such an act, and by the same token, they all failed to make the match.

ABBIE.—I heard there was one match that Diarmaun failed to make.

SHEILA.—What match was that, Abbie?

ABBIE. - Mr. Quilty's match.

KATE.—Oh, indeed, Abbie, I heard of it, but I did not hear of its being broken off. What broke it? Everybody was surprised to think that he should

marry Janet.

ABBIE.—Well, there were a lot of joking fellows gathered east at Michael the Smith's forge, and Diarmaun was there. They were saying that Mr. Quilty had a firkin full of gold under the head of his bed after he came home from foreign parts. "You couldn't do better, Diarmaun," said one of them, "than make a match for him." "To whom should I speak?" said Diarmaun. "To White Thady," said another man. They all shouted and laughed. He thought they were shouting their approval of the match. Out he went, and away east to Mr. Quilty's house. "Mr. Quilty," said Diarmaun, "I have made a match for you."—"God spare you your health, Dermot!" said Mr. Quilty, "and that you may

not have that length of illness in the year. Who is she?"-" Gently, gently, Mr. Quilty. It is no matter to you, as yet, who she is. I won't tell you who she is. I won't mention her name to you until I know whether you are ready and resolved to marry."-"I am ready and fully resolved," said he.- "Very well," said Diarmaun, I will tell them so," and off he went. He went away west to White Thady's house. He found nobody at home but Janet. "Janet," said he, "I have made a match for you." - " May you not be rewarded for your trouble!" said she.-" I shall be rewarded," said be. "He has a firkin full of gold under the head of his bed."-" Yes, and vou have a firkin full of nonsense under the foot of yours! How would he get it?"-"By bringing it from over the sea," said he.-" Oh, is it Mr. Quilty you are talking about?" said she. -" It is that same man exactly that I am talking about," said he.—" Have you spoken to him?" said she. "I have just this moment come from him," said he. "He said that he was ready and fully resolved to marry you."-There was not a day for a whole week after that, that she didn't think every moment that it was Mr. Quilty that was coming in at the door to her when she heard anybody coming. At last her patience gave way. Off she went east to Mr. Quilty's house.

PEG.—She didn't!

ABBIE.—I tell you she did, and with her head in the air, looking as vain and silly as it always did.

Mr. Quilty wondered what had brought her. He

¹ A common expression of thanks for a service quickly rendered.

had been so long out of the country that he did not know who she was.

"Fy don't you marry me?" said she.

"Fot does I want you for?" said he, "you head of a fool!"

KATE.—I understand it all now. Diarmaun has not passed their door since, and he would not be more loth to meet a red soldier on the road than either of the two—Janet or her father.

SHEILA.—Say it in Irish, Abbie.

ABBIE.—"Cao 'na taob na pórann tú mire?" said she.—"Cao é an 5nó béad asam díot-ra, a plaors dinrise?" said he.

SHEILA.—There, now I understand it. What an ugly sort of talk that English is! I don't know, myself, why in the world people want so much to speak it. They say nothing but "Fot? fot? fot?" like a hen with the pip.

CHAPTER XII.

MARY FOLLOWS SHIANA'S EXAMPLE.

Nora.—Listen, Peg; surely Shiana was not bound not to marry.

Peg.—I think, Nora, he was bound not to do what

was wrong.

NORA.—That was not what Short Mary understood from him, but that there was a special obligation upon him before God, like the vow of a nun or of a monk.

Peg.—How do you or I know that he didn't take some vow or obligation of that sort upon himself before he went to speak to her that day?

NORA .- That was how Mary understood the thing,

at all events.

PEG.—You are quite right, Nora.

She was talking to Michael's mother a couple of days afterwards, and this is how she spoke to her:—

"Hannah," said she, "isn't it a great wonder that Shiana didn't tell you the other day that he was a Céile Dé, and not let us be under a false impression, as he did?"

SHEILA.—What is a Céile Dé, Peg? Surely nobody could be a spouse to God,—praise and thanks be to Him!

KATE.—Oh, indeed, Peg, I heard my grandfather say that there used to be people long ago who wouldn't marry any woman, because they used to be married to the God of Glory Himself; and that was the name he called them, Céile Dé.

SHEILA.—Why, how could they be married like that?

Sure that isn't a marriage.

KATE.—If they were not married how could they be called Céile? Isn't Céile a married man or a married woman? Isn't it, Peg?

Peg.—It is, of course.

Sheila.—But then, Peg, how could a man be married to God? Why, a man couldn't be married except to a woman. Did anybody ever hear the like!

ABBIE.—Oh, Sheila, how sharp you are! Who told

^{1 &}quot;Spouse of God," the name of an order of monks in very early Christian times in Ireland; usually anglicised "Culdee."

you that a man couldn't be married except to a woman?

Sheila.—Peg told me the other day when she was teaching me the seven Sacraments. And see how you didn't tell me that, Peg—that there used to be people long ago that were married to God Almighty.

KATE.—There used to be, indeed. I heard my grand-father say it seven times—no, but seven and

thirty times.

Sheila.—Oh, indeed it is easy for Kate Buckley to talk. It isn't everybody that has a grandfather. I had a grandfather too for a while, but he died. The fever carried him off—health be where it is told!

- KATE.—Hush, Sheila dear! See now, I didn't think what I was saying till I had said it. Oh dear, I never yet failed to do the wrong thing! Hush, Sheila darling, like a good girl. I remember your grandfather right well. I was very fond of him.
- PEG.—You were, Kate, and he was very fond of you. He was fonder of you than of anybody else except Sheila herself. I remember well when you used to be here, and when he put Sheila on his knee, she wasn't satisfied and she wouldn't give us quiet or peace, young as she was, until you were put on the other knee. Then you never saw such fun as he used to have, pretending to be nodding asleep while you two were trying to kiss each other unknown to him.

ABBIE.—Oh, indeed, Peg, she gave a kiss to Kate now!

SHEILA.—I will, and another! Look!

ABBIE.—Oh, give her as many as you like, my dear child!

Nora.—You haven't told us yet, Peg, how a person could be a Céile Dé?

Peg.—What used your grandfather to say, Kate?

KATE.—He used to say that they gave up to God the love that a man gives to his wife.

PEG.—That is just it.

SHEILA.—Upon my word, Peg, it was not for love of God—praise for ever to Him!—but for fear of the Black Man, that Shiana made a Céile Dé of himself.

PEG.—The Black Man was not to come until the thirteen years should be spent, and there was nothing to prevent him from marrying her in the meantime.

SHEILA.—Isn't that what I say? When he came perhaps he would carry them both away with him.

ABBIE.—And wouldn't that show, Sheila, that it was for love of Short Mary herself that he would not marry her?

PEG.—Exactly so, Abbie. And if he gave up to God the love that he had for her, when he couldn't give it to herself without putting her into the power of the Black Man, isn't that the very thing that would make a Céile Dé of him, just as your grandfather said, Kate?

ABBIE.—I suppose so.

Peg.—It is not supposing; it is a certainty, Abbie.

But still I don't think Short Mary understood that view of the matter. If she had understood it, it is not likely she would have said what she did say to Michael's mother.

"Isn't it a great wonder," said she, "that he didn't tell us he was a Céile Dé, and not let us be

under a false impression?"

"He didn't say a word to me, ma'am," said Hannah, "but that it would be better for you to die the worst death anybody ever died than that he

himself should marry you."

"He was west at our house a couple of days ago," said Short Mary, "that day that Michael was there; and he said to myself that he was bound before God never to marry. Think of it, Hannah," said she, " of all men in the great wide world, who would think of Shiana being under such a bond? I never was so much surprised in my born days. I tell you," said she, "that he opened my eyes for me. That man, of whom people say that he has no religion, to have such an obligation upon him in the sight of God; and I, who have the reputation of such great piety, to be breaking my heart trying to come between him and God! Isn't that a nice thing, Hannah? I don't know in the earth, or the world either, what took me, or what blinded me, or what dulled my mind and my faculties, that I should do such a thing. What will the neighbours say?"

"Never fear, ma'am, for that part of it. They have settled it already that it was Shiana himself that went west to ask you, and that you refused on the spot, and that then the poor man went out of his mind."

"Dear me," said Mary, "weren't they a short time settling it? What does Shiana himself say to that settlement?"

"Not a word out of his mouth," said Hannah. "And I can tell you there is no fear that anyone will ask him a question; or if anyone does, and he looks that person in the eyes, cut off my ear if he asks a

second question."

"He is the most extraordinary man I ever met," said Mary. "It was a long time before I could make out whether he was a bad man or a good one. The first time I saw that look of his. I thought that the Evil One-the sign of the Cross between us and him !-was in his heart, so that I didn't like to meet him on the road, or to speak a word to him. But one night I was coming home from the town, and as I was going along the Broad Road, I had a touch of faintness, and I sat down on a stone in a bend of the fence of the road. I fell asleep, and when I woke up, the little faintness was gone, but it was the very dead of night. I jumped up and set out for home, and I promise you there was no numbness in my feet. It was a fine, sky-bright night. When I was about twenty yards from the cross-roads, who should come up Bohar na Bro2 but John of the Moon, the cut-throat of a thief!"

SHEILA.—Who was he, Peg?

Peg.—He was an evil spirit that used to show him-

self there, and he used to kill people.

"When I saw him," said she, "I thought at once that I was done for. With that I heard some-body walking behind me. I looked over my shoulder. Who should be there but Shiana, with his two eyes blazing, and holding a drawn knife in his hand, a black-handled knife. He passed by me and faced the spirit. At the same moment I saw a flash of flame, and immediately after I saw Shiana in the place, alone.

i.e., bright by reflection, the moon itself not being visible. botan na bpó, "the road of the big flat stone."

"'Well, Mary,' said he, 'you have had a great escape to-night. I saw you coming this way, and I wondered what caused you to be out so late. I followed you for fear of this spot. Come away now,

and I will see you home safe.'

"I hadn't the strength to speak, and I was hardly able to walk. He did not part from me till he left me west at my father's door. From that day to this no one, old or young, has heard a word from his lips about the affair. The next morning there was found at the cross-roads a lump of jelly the size of my fist, with a black-handled knife stuck in it. And I don't think anyone has seen John of the Moon since in the place. I thought it was a great deed on Shiana's part to put his own life into that danger for my sake, and I began to feel a very great regard for him. Indeed, Hannah, I can't tell you what a state my mind was in from that night until that day that he went west to tell me that there was some bond or obligation between himself and God, and that it was impossible for him to marry. I thought then that probably it was that bond that gave him the power over the evil spirit. I have always heard that people who were altogether given up like that to God had power to defeat the Evil One. When he told me that he was bound before God never to marry, I took the same vow upon myself in the sight of God. And do you know, Hannah, no sooner had I taken it, than it seemed to me that whatever evil thing it was that was in my mind, it went from me at that moment. You saw yourself the state I was in that day that I asked you to do a certain thing for me. When I think of it now I fancy I must really have been out

of my senses to some degree. Whatever it was that was wrong with me, it is clean gone—great thanks be to the God of Glory for it!"

"Amen, O Lord!" said Hannah.

SHEILA.—Whisper, Peg, wasn't "John of the Moon" a very funny name for a ghost? Was it that he was never seen except by moonlight?

PEG.—The night Short Mary saw him was a sky-

bright night.

SHEILA.—That's just it. And then, why was he called "John of the Moon," if he used to be seen when the moon was not up at all?

PEG.—He was a mortal man at first, and he was a thief, and he used to be out at night stealing, by moonlight. His name was John, and they called him John of the Moon as a nickname, because of the stealing. He used to be in Bohar na Bro at night, watching the people who would be coming along the road late in the night, and he used to rob them. At last he killed a man there on a dark night, and after a while he killed another. Then those people's friends came and hid themselves near the road, and when it was pretty late in the night one of them went out on the road and pretended to be drunk. John was watching too, and when he saw the drunken man, as he thought he was, he jumped out and attacked him. Then they all jumped out, and John of the Moon was killed. And from that time onward the ghost used to be seen in Bohar na Bro, and "John of the Moon" stuck to the ghost as its name.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIVE'S NEW TACTICS.

SHEILA.—Well now, Peg, how nicely Short Mary behaved after all!

PEG.—Why, what did she do, Sheila?

SHEILA.—She promised Shiana that she would keep his secret, and she didn't keep it. She told it to Hannah, and she had no right to tell it to anybody. She was as much bound to keep it as a priest would be to keep a secret that he heard in confession.

PEG.—I think, Sheila, that it was for Shiana's good she told the secret to Hannah, so that Hannah

should have the more respect for him.

SHEILA.—All very fine! But it wasn't for his good; it was for her own. When that confusion left her mind she began to be ashamed to think that she had sent Hannah to Shiana to ask him to marry her, and she wanted to tell the whole story to Hannah so that Hannah mightn't blame her.

Peg.—Well, Sheila, if that was why she did it, I suppose Shiana himself wouldn't blame her for it.

SHEILA.—He told it to her as a secret. What good is a secret unless it is kept? She ought to have left the thing as it was, and not to have talked any more about it to any living being. Shiana wouldn't blame her, do you say? All very well! That is not the way to keep a secret. I declare

to you, Peg, I didn't think she would have told it, even to Hannah.

Peg.—It was well for her, Sheila, that you were not there when she was telling it to Hannah.

SHEILA.—You may say so! I promise you I would have said something to her that Hannah didn't say. "Have no fear, Shiana," said she, "I will keep your secret." She kept it nicely too! Blabbing it out as soon as she began to talk to Hannah! If any other woman than Short Mary had done it, I wouldn't be half so much surprised; but she that I thought would not let out a secret if she were to be torn between horses!

Nora.—Upon my word, Sheila, there are many people who wouldn't let a secret escape if they were to be torn between horses, and yet would let it go from them when nobody was asking them for it.

Sheila.—If so, those are not people like Short Mary.

Kate.—But listen, Sheila, she had told Hannah as great a secret as that already, and what harm was it to tell her another secret as well?

Sheila.—That one was her own. There was nothing to hinder her doing what she liked with her own secret, but it is not the same with another person's secret.

PEG.—You are right, Sheila; but understand this: a good secret and a bad secret are not the same thing. The secret that would have injured Shiana, he never told at all. The secret he told to Short Mary was one that she was not bound, in that strict sense, to keep, when she knew that it would be of more service than injury to

Shiana if she told it to Hannah—especially as Hannah already knew Mary's own secret.

Abbie.—Tell me, Peg. Surely the priest did not know Shiana's secret.

Peg.—Who said he did?

ABBIE.—Why, one would imagine, by the way he spoke, that he knew as much about it as the barefooted woman did.

PEG.—How so?

ABBIE.—The priest said Shiana was trampling down his own heart for the Saviour's sake, and I think the barefooted woman said the same words when he saw her on the mountain. How could they say the same thing unless they both knew the same secret?

PEG.—I dare say the woman knew the secret. She was one of the three to whom he gave the alms for the Saviour's sake, and she was not an earthly woman. With the priest it was different. He had no knowledge of the secret, and he had no means of getting any such knowledge.

Abbie.—Then what made him say the same thing? Peg.—I really don't know, Abbie, what made him say the same thing. When I first heard the story myself, I didn't ask that question. What I thought in my own mind was that the priest supposed that Shiana was married already, secretly.

KATE.—Why, what else? Isn't that what anybody would think?

ABBIE.—But then, why should the priest praise him for that? Great credit to him, indeed, for not marrying a woman when he was married already!

KATE.—How well the Yellow Pensioner married when he was married already.

ABBIE.—The rascal! Remember what happened to him, though.

SHEILA.—What happened to him, Abbie?

KATE.—The thing he deserved, Sheila. He was transported.

ABBIE.—I heard he was very near being hanged.

KATE.—Yes, because it was said that he was married three times, and that he had killed the first wife, but he was not convicted of it.

Shella.—Why, he couldn't be married three times

and the three wives be living.

ABBIE.—Couldn't he pretend to each of them that he was married to nobody but herself?

SHEILA.—Oh, the thief! Wouldn't it be a great wrong and a great lie for him to do such a thing?

ABBIE.—I dare say such a man as he would think little of telling a great lie, and he would think lightly of doing a heavy wrong.

KATE.—It's no great harm that he's gone over the

water.

ABBIE.—No; and it's no great harm that he left very few of his sort behind him.

SHEILA.—But listen, Peg; I wonder what power there was in that jewel that the barefooted woman gave to Shiana, so that the great grief left him so suddenly. What a pity that everybody who is in trouble has not one like it.

Peg.—So far as I understand the thing, Sheila dear, I think there are a great many people who do possess that jewel, and that it does soften and

soothe grief for them.

SHEILA.—How is that, Peg?

PEG.—One who crushes down his own desire, and gives up his own will for God's sake, or for the Saviour's sake, or for justice and right's sake, will have the remembrance of that act in his heart; and when grief comes upon him it will not take a strong grip of his heart.

ABBIE.—And I suppose, the greater the desire, the

greater the act.

PEG.—Yes. And that was why the woman said that Shiana had done that day the noblest act that had been done in Ireland for many a day before it—"to put away from his heart the best woman in Ireland rather than do her so great a wrong."

Nora.—I think it was a great pity that they were

parted from one another.

KATE.—Hush, Nora! Wouldn't it have been a much greater pity if they had married, seeing how

things stood?

Nora.—Well, Kate, indeed I suppose it is true for you. Things were in a sad state, one way or the other. It was a terrible pity that he didn't look before him.

KATE.—Stop a moment, Nora. I wouldn't say things were quite so bad as that. Shiana had got that jewel, and the great grief had gone away out of his heart. He was humming away as gaily as ever. Even if the thirteen years were passing along at a hand-gallop, he had one consolation; when the final day came no one would suffer but himself. And as for Short Mary, I think she came out of it very well. How would it have been with her if Shiana had done as the Yellow

Pensioner would have done? He did not do so. And when he told her that he was bound before God never to marry, it put her in double the heart. One would think that she too had been presented with some wondrous jewel. She had just admitted to Hannah that her heart was being wrung with grief. That wringing of the heart had left her. I think myself that nothing better could have happened to those two than that they should be parted as they were. I feel sure that it was no good influence that was drawing them together, and that whatever it was that was putting them apart, it was working for their good.

ABBIE.—There was nothing putting them apart except that Shiana wouldn't do what was wrong.

KATE.—What put it into his heart not to do what was wrong? He need not have told any one living whether he had a secret or not. There was nothing to hinder him from marrying her; nothing to prevent him saying to himself: "Who knows if I shall live even the thirteen years? Who knows if that Black Man will ever come. after the fright he got the time he gave that extraordinary roar?" I think some good influence was moving him, otherwise he would not have resisted the making of the match so firmly and so resolutely. Then there is another thing. While the match was being made there was nothing but worry and trouble of mind for everyone who had any hand in it, and especially for Shiana and Short Mary themselves. But as soon as it was completely set aside, Mary had

twice as much heart as before, and Shiana returned to his humming. I think it was a very good thing for them that it was not allowed to go on.

- SHEILA.—It was no thanks to Michael that it didn't go on.
- ABBIE.—Just hear her! After her saying a little while ago that it was Michael and his blundering that had caused the match to be broken off.
- SHEILA.—I said he was no good at matchmaking, and I say it again now; but it doesn't follow from that that he didn't do his best at it. It failed them all completely. I wonder what Sive said when she heard that Short Mary's match was broken off as well as her own.

PEG.—She said a queer thing, indeed. She said it was she herself who had broken it, and that whatever match might be made for Shiana she would break off in the same way, since he would not marry her.

KATE.—The hateful thing !—but I mustn't abuse her.—It would have been a good thing if she had had the misfortune of his marrying her.

Nora.—I bet you he would not do a wrong to her any more than he would to Short Mary.

- ABBIE.—Hush, Nora. You needn't bet about that.

 No fear for her. I don't think the Yellow

 Pensioner himself would do that wrong to

 Sive!
- KATE.—If he did, I think he'd suffer for it. Sive would be worse to him than the law.
- Abbie.—I guess he'd be in a hurry to go over the water to escape from her.

KATE.—What a fright the man with the horns would give her!

ABBIE.—Upon my word, Kate, it is my opinion that she wouldn't allow him much odds. If he gave her a fright, she would give him a fright. If she got hold of him by the horn, or by his goatee beard, I fancy he would be better pleased to be rid of her.

Nora.—And what would the tail be doing? If she were to get a prod or two from that claw, I think she would give a screech.

ABBIE.—Oh, Nora, you will soon outdo me! I never thought of the claw. I was thinking that perhaps she might pitch hot water at him, straight in the eyes.

Nora.—Why, what would he care for hot water, after the heat of the place he came from?

KATE.—She has beaten you, Abbie.

ABBIE.—She has, clean. I'll say no more.

Sheila.—That's a good thing. I'd soon be getting frightened. Poor Shiana was much to be pitied with such a prospect before him.

ABBIE.—How do you know, Sheila, that the prospect would be a certainty?

SHEILA.—What do you mean, Abbie?

ABBIE.—How do you know that he ever came?

Sheila.—Why, wasn't it just upon that he made the bargain?

ABBIE.—Perhaps, as Kate said just now, he got too great a fright the time that roar was forced from him, and that he wouldn't come again to claim the fulfilment of his bargain, for fear that another roar might be forced from him.

Sheila.—Hear her! Did he come, Peg?
Peg.—Wait a while, Sheila dear, and you will hear
the whole story exactly as it happened.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DILEMMA.

PEG.—As I said a while ago, when Grey Dermot's Sive understood that Short Mary's match was broken off, she told everyone that it was she herself who had broken it, and that the reason why she broke it was that Shiana had made a promise of marriage to herself.

Nobody contradicted her. Some people believed it and some did not; but whether they believed it or not, there was no fear that anybody would try to dispute the matter with her. She was always boasting that she was the girl to put down forward, chattering hussies like the Maid of the Liss and Nora of the Causeway. And as for Short Mary, she was sure that she had too much respect for herself to marry a man who had been promised to another woman.

Sheila.—Oh, wasn't she a villain!

PEG.—You see, Sheila, the way it was with her at last was this: she had told the story in that way so often, without anyone contradicting her, that I think in the end she quite believed it herself.

SHEILA.—How could she believe he had promised to marry her, when he had never mentioned such a thing to her?

PEG.—It is wonderful, Sheila, how readily and easily we sometimes believe a thing that pleases us, especially if we are so obstinate that nobody thinks it worth while to give us wholesome advice, and that if they did, we wouldn't take it from them.

ABBIE.—Indeed I suppose that was what happened to Con Shaun Og. He was coming home from the town one night, and he stayed drinking somewhere until most of the night was spent. Then when he was getting near home he was afraid his mother would blame him for keeping her all night at the fireside waiting for him. What did he do but pretend that he had seen a ghost below on the Broad Road. His mother believed it because of the place having the name of being eerie. Never a neighbour came in for a long time after, that she didn't make Con tell the story. The end of it was that Con became so terrified of the ghost he had never seen, that he daren't walk along the Broad Road after nightfall, though he were to get all Ireland for it.

PEG.—Whether Sive herself believed it or not, there were many of the neighbours who believed it at once, and it was not long until they all believed it. Probably they thought that, owing to the dealing in leather between Dermot and Shiana, it was likely that the promise did exist. At all events, it was fixed in their minds that it was on account of Sive that Short Mary's match had come to

nothing. Then, when they recalled to mind that famous visit of Dermot's up to Shiana's house, they came to the conclusion that Dermot was not quite so ignorant of his own business as they had thought.

"Ah!" they would say to each other, "there isn't a ghost or a pooka that doesn't know what

he is about."

Michael and his mother were really heavy-hearted over the matter. Certainly Hannah knew that Sive had had nothing whatever to do with the breaking off of the match, but Michael did not know that. And if Hannah was heavy-hearted because that pair were parted from one another for ever in this world, Michael was heavy-hearted, and vexed and furious, to think that such an evil fate should befall Shiana as that he should have made a promise of marriage to Sive.

Sheila.—But he hadn't, Peg. Peg.—Michael thought he had.

SHEILA.—I wouldn't doubt him! Isn't it a wonder that he couldn't fail, once in a way, to think the wrong thing!

PEG.—Why, she had put it into everybody's mouth. She had spread it through the country. Except Shiana himself and Short Mary and Hannah, there wasn't a single human creature that hadn't the story exactly as Sive had published it. Even as to John Kittach himself; it was firmly fixed in his mind that Shiana had really given a promise of marriage to Sive, and that it was that promise that was weighing on Shiana's mind the day they were walking in the field opposite Shiana's house, when he (John) was urging him to marry Mary,

and Shiana was admitting his love for her, and at the same time placing every sort of obstacle in the way of the match.

Sheila.—And is that what they were talking about?
How was it found out, Peg?

PEG.—It wasn't found out until Sive's rumour spread throughout the district and until John heard it. Then he struck his knee with the palm of his hand, and said to himself, "Oh, I see now what was on Shiana's mind that day. Isn't it a great wonder," said he, "that he didn't tell me, clean and straight, what he had on his mind, and not to have me at him, urging him to marry one woman, while he had given a promise of marriage to another? Now I think of it," said he, "I wonder what evil fate was over him to make him give such a promise to such a woman."

When John and the priest met they settled the question between them to their own satisfaction. Until then, neither of them had been able to make head or tail of the thing, but when Sive's report reached them they understood it all thoroughly. Sheila.—They thought they did.

PEG.—They thought they did, yes. They thought they knew all the ins and outs of the story exactly and completely, as soon as they had heard of the promise; and they were full of pity and sorrow because of the ill-luck that had fallen upon Shiana and the way in which Sive was making mischief and trouble for him.

"I don't know in the world," said the priest, "what dulness of vision came over him to cause him to make such a promise to such a woman."

"I suppose," said John, "he must have done it

during the time that he was so poor. He used often to get leather on credit from Dermot, and perhaps the poor fellow thought that if he were to marry Sive he would have a dry and full hearth, whatever happened, and whatever other comfort he might have or lack."

"I'll engage," said the priest, "that there was no fear of her marrying him then. But all the same, perhaps she wouldn't object to accepting the promise from him. There are no bounds to people like her, when once they take to trickery and cheating and

telling lies."

"I declare to you, Father," said John Kittach, "that I believe you are right. Still, there is a good deal in it that is hard to understand. The day he was back at my house, he said he wanted to speak a couple of words to Mary. It seemed to me that he had hardly had time to enter the house when he was gone. If he spoke at all he didn't speak more than the two words. He went off like a bird. Whatever he said, I never saw such a change in any Christian as there was in her from that time forward. Her appetite and her colour returned. The languor and dulness departed; very soon her voice was as full of life and her laugh was as ringing as any laugh I ever heard from her mother in her youngest days. If he told her that he had made a promise to Sive, it is hard to suppose that that would raise the gloom from her heart as it was raised. I should have thought its effect would have been to plunge her into absolute melancholy."

"Upon my word and credit, John," said the priest, "you surprise me very much indeed. The day he came here to speak to me I thought of course

that he had come to arrange the marriage finally. He said to me that he would rather than all the gold and silver he had in the world that he were able to marry Mary. I thought I had happy news to tell him when I said that I knew Mary was quite willing to agree to the match. Instead of that, you would think I had told him she was dead. 'It is a miserable and disastrous business,' said he, and he rushed out at the door from me like a madman.

"Whatever he said to Mary to take away her depression, I am afraid that Sive has some tight grip upon him, and that if she hadn't she wouldn't be boasting of it all over the country as she is; nor would he part so easily from a woman for whom he cares so much, and she for him.

"And look," said the priest, "at the other side of the matter. He has not parted from Mary more

easily than she has parted from him."

"By the deer, Father, it's true for you!" said John. "Though no one else has any claim upon her."

"It is the most extraordinary case I have ever

met with," said the priest.

"Wouldn't it be reasonable to expect, Father," said John, "that if he did give a promise to Dermot's Sive, it should be possible to get at the root of the matter, and set the promise aside? Surely the world knows he is not bound in the sight of God to fulfil that promise."

"Doubtless," said the priest, "if the promise

does exist, he is not bound to fulfil it."

"If it does exist, Father, do you say?" said John. "That implies that you think it does not

exist. If it does not exist, oughtn't it to be possible to put a curb on Sive's tongue? If what she is saying is all lies—if she has no claim upon Shiana by right of any promise,—she beats all the women I have ever seen, and Shiana beats all the men I have ever seen."

"How so?" said the priest.

"If Sive has no claim upon him," said John, what is coming between him and marrying my daughter?"

"That is exactly the question," said the priest.

"It is, Father," said John, "and I have a mind to follow up that question until I succeed in solving it, sooner or later. If you were in my case, Father," said he, "it wouldn't suit you very well to have Dermot's Sive making you ridiculous like this."

"Sive is making no one ridiculous but herself, John," said the priest. "But all the same you are right in saying that it would be a great pity not to teach some manners to the like of her if it were possible. And now I think of it, surely Dermot would not have gone up so boldly to Shiana's house to ask him 'what he meant to do next Tuesday,' if he had not had some right or title."

"And see for yourself, Father," said John, "what sort of answer Shiana gave him. 'I have no notion of marrying,' said he, 'nor will I have yet awhile;' just as if he meant to say, 'I am not ready yet to

fulfil that promise."

"Really, John," said the priest, "I am inclined to think you are right. She has got a firm hold on him, and it is a great pity."

Sheila.—Oh dear, oh dear! Look at that for work! What mischief was taking

away their senses? Why, surely the world knows he could say that without having any promise upon him. They were a nice pair, and I wouldn't mind if it weren't the priest himself!

KATE.—Oh, but look, Sheila dear, they knew nothing about Shiana's secret, and had no idea of anything of the kind. If they had had, perhaps they would have understood the whole affair as well as we do. But how could anybody have thought of it? He never told it to a living soul. He never let a word slip from his lips about it to anybody that ever lived, from the first day to that day on which they were speaking. Did you notice how carefully and how well he kept it from every single person that spoke to him? I have been watching the story, thinking from time to time that some word would slip from him that would let it out; but he did not let the smallest tittle of it escape him. There was nothing preventing him from marrying Short Mary, but the secret that he possessed in his own mind. Neither the priest nor John Kittach had any knowledge whatever of that secret. Sive had published it all through the country that he had promised to marry her. Nobody was contradicting that statement. How could anybody tell but that there might perhaps be some fragment of truth in it? I don't think John Kittach and the priest could very well come to any other conclusion than that the promise must have been made.

SHEILA.—But surely it was very unfair, Kate.

KATE.—It certainly was, but how could it have been helped?

Sheila.—I think people should look before them, and not do what is unfair and wrong.

KATE.—You are quite right, Sheila, they should. But that does not alter the fact that many a man has been wrongfully hanged without anyone being able to help it.

ABBIE.—I have heard that a man was hanged wrongfully like that, west near Rathmore, long ago, the time the Whiteboys broke into the coach and killed the man who was guard to it.

Nora.—What need had they to kill him, Abbie? Abbie.—The fact was, they thought the coachman had a paper containing the names of all the leaders of the Whiteboys, and that when the coach reached Tralee, soldiers would be sent out, and every man whose name was in that paper would be arrested and hanged. What they planned was to waylay the coach and to take away the paper, either by consent or by force. When they asked for the paper, all the guard did was to fire at them. They had fire-

arms as well as he, and they fired at him, and he fell dead on the road. The next morning a poor old man, who used to be herding near the place, walked out upon the road, and when he saw the dead man he stopped to look at him with terror in his eyes. Just then the

soldiers came up, and the old man was taken, and a gallows was put up at once to hang him. Sheila.—But why hang him without cause?

Abbie.—Believe me, Sheila, those fellows didn't care whether there was a cause for it or not.

He was a poor simple, sinless old man. He asked that a priest might be brought to him, and he was brought. When he had made his confession, and they were taking him up to the gallows, his legs were bending under him with terror. He could neither stand nor walk. Then the priest spoke to him and said, "You need not be so much afraid. No sooner will your soul have parted from your body on the gallows than you will be enjoying the bliss of heaven at once." "Do you tell me so?" said the poor old man. "I do, certainly," said the priest. "Jesus Christ and Mary, His Mother, are up there waiting for you." Strength and courage came to him immediately. "Keep away from me!" said he to them. He went up the ladder without help, and they hanged him. He was eighty years old.

KATE.—It was a nice thing to do! If I got a chance at them I would hang them as I would hang mad dogs. The hateful cowards! The poor old man. And they must have known that he was not, and could not be, guilty. Oughtn't

they to have been ashamed?

ABBIE.—Ashamed! Why, what did those fellows know about shame? They used to be shooting and hanging the people everywhere at that time. Isn't there that man down in Macroom, who came along up by Gortnalicka one Sunday morning on horseback, with his gun in front of him, and when he saw a poor man on his knees beside a bush saying the Rosary, he put a bullet through him?

KATE.—Yes, indeed, Abbie, it is quite true. He did

it just like that. I was in Macroom one day with Nell, and she pointed him out to me, and upon my word, when I saw him it made me shudder. There he was grey and strong, walking the street as boldly as if he had never done such a deed. I couldn't help staring hard at his right hand. He noticed me looking at that hand, and the villain got blue in the face. I was dying to get away out of his sight, I can tell you.

SHEILA.—Who is he, Kate?

KATE.—Why, that old rogue below, Dr. White.

Sheila.—And why wasn't he hanged?

ABBIE.—Ay, indeed! Why wasn't he hanged! Why wasn't Malachi hanged? No. It was the MacCarthys that were hanged, when Malachi swore that they had done the deed that he had done himself.

KATE.—Wasn't it Cormac MacCarthy that shot Bob Hutchinson, Abbie?

ABBIE.—Yes, when Malachi Duggan stood behind him and put the muzzle of his gun up to his back, and said "Shoot him, Cormac, or I'll shoot you!" And indeed, there were none of the MacCarthys there except Cormac. Neither Callaghan nor Thade was there at all, yet all three were hanged. But no fear, Sheila, that Malachi was hanged.

SHEILA.—Why, anybody would think, by what you say, Abbie, that it is the guilty people that mostly go free, and that it is the honest people that are hanged. The old man west at Rathmore was hanged, but the people who hanged him were not hanged. The MacCarthys were hanged,

but Malachi was not hanged. Dr. White was not hanged.

ABBIE.—Did you ever hear, Sheila, what old Jonathan Leader said to the labourer? "I am an honest man," said the labourer.—"An honest man," said Jonathan. "Go away, honest man!" said he. "An honest man wouldn't do for me at all." Peg.—Well, stop now, Abbie.

"She has got a firm hold on him," said the priest, and it is a great pity. But what are we to do?"

"What could we do," said John, "but set the promise aside? Shiana is not bound to keep the promise. No man living would be bound to keep it in such a case. The promise is void."

"All that is true enough," said the priest, "but how is it to be set aside? That is the question.

What is the first move we have to make?"

"The first move I should make, Father," said John, "would be to go east to Grey Dermot's house, and to come to the point with him and Sive without preface, and to tell them plain and straight that the promise is of no effect, and that it is only nonsense for them to expect that they could ever enforce it against the man."

"If you do that," said the priest, "I fancy the first move Sive will make will be to ask you shortly and stiffly who told you to come and speak to her, and was it Shiana that sent you to her with that message; and if it was, that her own advice to you is to go home and mind your own business, and to

let Shiana do the same."

"Well, Father," said John, "what would you say to my going to speak to Shiana himself first?"

"And what would you say to him?" said the priest.

"I would say to him that it is a great pity for him to let his life pass away from him abiding by a promise that has no force, when he is not bound before God

to fulfil the promise."

"I can't make any guess," said the priest, "as to the answer you would get from him. He is too deep and too mysterious a man. No matter how keenly you might guess at what he would say, when the words came they would be seven miles away from your guess. But I could promise you that he would say something that you would not expect, and that would upset all your ideas."

"I don't know in the world, Father," said John,

"what I had better do."

"Did Mary tell you," said the priest, "what Shiana said to her the day he went to your house?"

"No, Father," said John, "and I didn't ask her."

"Perhaps," said the priest, "if you knew what he said to her that day, it might show you enough of his mind to put you on the right road before you

went to speak to him."

"Very well, Father," said John. "I will ask her about it now when I get home, though I don't like talking about it to her at all, for fear that it might trouble her, and that that depression might come upon her again."

"All you need do," said the priest, "is to touch upon the subject as quietly and as carelessly as

possible."

CHAPTER XV.

CONSULTATIONS AND A SURPRISE.

John Kittach went away home, and as soon as he found an opportunity, he introduced the subject.

"It is wonderful, Mary," said he, "what an amount of good Shiana is doing all about the country. I don't know in the world how his money holds out. I don't believe there is one, or hardly one, poor person in the parish now who has not received something from him."

"No, father, there isn't," said she, "nor if you said in the seven parishes next to it. I often wonder very much too, when I hear the people talking, how it is that he has not gone bankrupt long ago. It is not in shillings nor in pounds the money is going from him, but in scores and in hundreds of pounds."

"I often think," said John, "that it is very surprising that he should let it go from him like that. Why, a man could do good, and give alms, and distribute charity, without wronging himself to such an extent. What many people say is, that he is out of his mind."

"Out of his mind!" said she. "It is hard to escape their tongues. If he were a mean-spirited, good-for-nothing fellow they would find fault with him; they would say he was making his money by avarice and stinginess. Now, when he can't be accused of avarice or of meanness, nothing will do but to say he is out of his mind. It is well for him that he cares very little for what they say. Whatever object he has in doing so much good, I dare say he knows his own mind."

"There are some who hint that it is trouble of mind that is affecting him," said he, "some great trouble: that he took some bond or promise, or something of that sort upon him, some obligation which he did not rightly understand in time. And then, when he understood what he had done, instead of making any effort to free himself, that he just fell into despair altogether."

Mary was silent; she did not pretend to notice anything in her father's words; but she was very much astonished.

"Surely it cannot be," said she to herself, "that the widow has let out the secret!"

"I should think," said John, "that if there were anything of that sort on his mind he would have told it to you that day, though certainly he gave himself very little time to tell you much at all."

"Indeed I should think so too," said she, indifferently. "I suppose," she went on, "that if there had been anything of that sort troubling him, he would have given himself time to tell it, and since he didn't give himself time, that it is a pretty sure sign that there wasn't." She had a stocking of her father's in her hand, and she was darning it, and you would think, to look at her, that her mind was more intent upon the stocking than upon the talk.

It was John's turn to be astonished then. "He never told it to her!" he said to himself. "Well, I suppose you are right," he said to her. "If it had been troubling him, he would have given himself time to tell it."

"Here," said she. "Put this on now, and let me see if it will hurt you."

Sheila.—Upon my word it was well for her that

she didn't let it out! I would never have had the same respect for her again, as long as she lived, and longer! Oh, the rogue! Hadn't she the stocking handy? Oh, Mary, you were never at a loss!

ABBIE.—What did John do then, Peg?

Peg.—As soon as he had an opportunity he walked east to the priest's house.

"Well, Father," said he, "I am more in the

dark now about this matter than ever I was."

"How so?" said the priest.

"Whatever he said to Mary the day he came west, he never spoke to her of any contract or promise of marriage."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when they heard a step coming to the door. Into the room

walked-Grey Dermot himself!

"Good morrow, Dermot," said the priest.

"Long may you live!" said Dermot. "How are you, John?"

"Well, thank you," said John.

They talked a little, none of them taking much interest in the talk.

At last Dermot said, "If you please, Father, I should like to speak to you for a moment."

"Would you mind staying here for a little while,

John?" said the priest.

"Very well, Father," said John. "Don't trouble about me."

They went into another room.

A little while passed, and a great while passed after it. At last Dermot went away and the priest returned. He had a very comical look on his face.

"Well, John," said he, "your question is solved, at all events."

"How is that, Father?" said he.

"Sive is going to be married," said the priest.

"How well I knew!" said John. "Wasn't I sure she had a hard and fast grip of him, and that she would never let him go!"

"It is not to Shiana she is to be married," said

the priest.

John stood still, and his eyes opened wide. "Not to Shiana, do you say?" said he.

"No," said the priest. "I cannot make out who the man is. Dermot says he is a gentleman, and that he comes from some place near Dublin, and that it is amazing what an amount of gold and silver and riches he has. He says they will be married in Dublin. He only wanted leave from me for the priest there to marry them. I make him a present of them most willingly, I assure you. I am not sorry to have no hand in the business. I am afraid it is a bad business. I asked him to put the thing off for a few days till I should have time to enquire about the place down there, and to make out who this great gentleman is who has all this wealth, and what is the reason why he couldn't find a wife down in his own country, and not come so far from home to look for one. The poor man himself is not very well pleased with the thing, but he says that Sive and the gentleman have settled the whole business."

"'Turning of horses brings change of tidings,'" said John. "I no more expected such a thing to happen than I would expect the sky above us to fall down. Whatever may be the end of this

business, there is an end to Sive's talk about her having any claim on Shiana. Whether she had until now any hold upon him by a promise or not, she cannot pretend any longer that she has, or that she ever had. It's an ill wind that blows

nobody good."

"You don't know Sive thoroughly. She is the most barefaced woman I ever met. It would not surprise me in the least—if it should happen that this business didn't succeed with her, and if this gentleman were to back out and leave her—to see her come before the whole country again as bold as ever she was, trying to persuade us all that Shiana was bound to marry her."

"And who would believe her, Father?" said

John.

"I dare say," said the priest, "that nobody who looked into the thing would believe her, but people generally accept a story of that sort without much examination. I myself never believed, from what anyone said, that he had made her any promise, until you persuaded me of it that last day that we were talking about it. And now I am sure that you were mistaken. I am quite sure, whatever it is that is preventing Shiana from marrying your daughter, that it has nothing to do with Sive, and that Sive has nothing to do with it, good, bad or indifferent."

"I hope," said John, "that this gentleman will marry her, whoever he is. I wouldn't grudge her to him. If he carried her off with him to Dublin

it would bring great peace to the country."

"I am afraid, John," said the priest, "that it

is not for that poor gentleman's good you say that."

"Like the cat, Father," said John. "'It's for

his own good the cat purrs."

"But, for all that," said the priest, "it is hard to know which of the two, Sive or the gentleman, will be the greater gainer or loser by the marriage, if it takes place. If he is really a gentleman, it is a long time since one came from Dublin who was such a perfect fool as he. That is the lady that will teach him the commandments of his religion before he has been long married to her! If he is an impostor, he won't be allowed much odds. If he imagines that he will be able to keep Sive in order, the poor man is making the greatest mistake he ever made in his life. Sive was not curbed in time. Her mother died before she was quite a year old. Dermot let her have her own way until it was too late, and she had got altogether out of control."

"I don't think it is a question of control, Father," said John. "I lost my Eileen when little Mary was only two years old. I never kept that child in any sort of subjection. She was allowed to have her own way, if ever a child was allowed it. Nobody ever did so much as raise their voice to her, not to speak of using an angry word to her, or striking her. And see how things are with us. Why, as sure as you are sitting there, she thinks of everything I want before I think of it myself."

"Certainly, John," said the priest, "there is a grace in some people more than in others, and there is a 'good drop' in some people more than in others—or a 'bad drop.' But, nevertheless, so far

as the generality of people are concerned, the proverb is true, and it can't be beaten, 'There is no luck or grace where there is no discipline.'

So they went on talking and discussing, John Kittach very well satisfied in his mind and very grateful to the gentleman who had come so far to meet Sive; and the priest very ill-satisfied in his mind for fear that the affair of Sive and the strange gentleman might come to no good end.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STRANGERS AT THE FAIR.

On the following day there was a fair in the town. Shiana was at the fair with a load of shoes. Michael was at the fair to stand by the load. Michael's mother was at the fair to sell a fat pig and to buy a young pig. John Kittach was at the fair with a large herd of dry cattle from the mountain to sell. Short Mary was at the fair with her father. The bailiff was at the fair, as puffy in the cheeks, as thick in the nose, as self-important, as keen-eyed, as broad in the back, as stout in the calves, as short in speech, as ever was John of the Fair. If you saw him coming up to you, you would think by his manner that he had a warrant in his pocket against you. If you merely saluted him, he would look at you as if you were going to hit him.

There were all sorts of horses there, as many as there had been on that first day when Shiana went there to buy a horse and a cow. There were acrobats there, and dancers, and musicians, and card-sharpers, and pickpockets. There were tinkers there from every quarter, far and near, and they were very troublesome and noisy and impudent and ill-mannered and ill-spoken. They and their wives and children were always flying at each other's heads, till you would think they were going to murder each other, but for all that, they never did.

There were thimble-riggers there, but Shiana's thimble-man was not among them, or if he was, Shiana never caught sight of him.

A race was run, just as on the first day, and everybody watched it. When it was finished, everybody was running about and shouting, but Shiana did not run, nor did he shout.

No sooner was the race over than a fight arose between two tinkers about a donkey's halter. A tinker who was stronger than either of them sprang in between them, and put them apart and took the halter himself.

Just then Shiana heard the people round him

whispering.

"Look! Look! They said. He looked in the same direction as they did. Whom should he see coming down the middle of the fair-green, while all the fair made way for them, but the pair—Sive and the strange gentleman!

Sive wore a scarlet gown, in which she blazed from top to toe. He was in a suit of broadcloth, looking very spick and span, clean-shaven, well set-up, well proportioned, well fed and strong and clear-skinned. Shiana could do nothing but stare at them when they came near him. It was the very

gentleman to whom he had refused the money, and whom he had called an "idle vagabond"!

He did not know what in the world he ought to say or do. He only stood just as he was and said nothing. They walked past him down the field, within three spades' lengths of him, without looking at him or noticing him any more than if he had not been there at all. They walked up at the other side of the field, the people making way for them and then pointing their fingers at them and shaking their heads and going into fits of laughter. When the big tinker saw them he stopped to look at them, with the donkey's halter over his arm. When they had gone past him he stole after them and swung the halter at them as if he were going to strike them: no fear that he really struck them, or that they were aware of him at all; but you would think that the people who were looking on at the fun would drop dead with laughter.

Shiana found no fun in it. He was too much amazed.

"Michael," said he, "go up as fast as your legs will carry you, and tell Grey Dermot that I want to speak to him at once."

Michael went off. Before he was half way up the field Dermot met him, and they returned.

"Who is that with Sive?" said Shiana.

"Indeed, Shiana," said Dermot, "I don't know much about him, except that he is a gentleman from somewhere near Dublin."

"What is his name?"

"Sheeghy MacGilpatrick his people call him."

"Who are his people?"

"Three other gentlemen who came with him."

- "What brought them here?"
- "They came to the fair."

" Why ?"

"To buy horses for the King."

"When did they come?"

"The day before yesterday, in the evening."

"Where have they spent the time since then?"

"They have been mostly out during the day, but they have been sleeping at my house."

"And what is this that Sive is up to?"

"A match has been made between herself and Sheeghy MacGilpatrick."

"How do you know the gentleman hasn't a wife

already?"

"That's the very thing the priest said to me last night when I was speaking to him. But I told him I only wanted to get leave from him for some priest in Dublin to marry them. He certainly would not ask that leave if he were married and had a wife already in Dublin."

"I see," said Shiana. "Who made the match?"

"Well, they were making fun and amusing themselves the first night, and each of them was telling the others that Sive would rather marry him than any of them.—'Let us cast lots upon it,' said one of them.—'Perhaps she wouldn't take the man on whom the lot fell,' said another. They put the question to her.—'I'll take him,' said she, 'if the lot falls on the man I like.' They all made great fun over that. They cast lots, and the lot fell on the man you saw walking with her a while ago. We all thought it was only a joke, but indeed he took it quite seriously. When Sive wanted to draw out of it he said, 'Indeed, my girl, that won't do. You said you would take the

man on whom the lot fell, if it fell on the man you liked. Take me now, or say that you don't like me.' The end of the argument was that the match was made."

"Did they buy many horses for the King?" said Shiana.

"The night they came," said Dermot, "they gave me, to put in a safe place to keep, a great iron box, brim-full of yellow gold. It was as much as I could lift with both hands. This morning they filled their pockets out of it as they were going out. When they had bought some horses and paid for them, and had sent them and their grooms off on the Dublin road, they would come back and take out some more of the gold, and buy more. At last the box was empty. When they were paying for the last lot they were three hundred pounds short. I hadn't it handy, but Sive had, and she lent it to them until they should all meet again in Dublin."

"Michael," said Shiana, "call the bailiff to me.

He is somewhere in the fair."

"There he is above," said Michael, "talking to John Bolg O'Daly. I will have him down to you directly."

The bailiff came.

"How many men have you?" said Shiana.

"Only twenty-one," said the bailiff.

"Draw them up at once round Grey Dermot's house," said Shiana. "There are four thieves there, and they have robbed the whole fair."

The bailiff whistled and rushed off. Dermot almost

fell.

"It will be better for you not to go near the house yet awhile," said Shiana. "Those fellows are not without edged weapons, and if things go hard with them they will have blood. Leave them to Cormac. He has a trick with that blackthorn stick of his that has often thrown a strong man off his feet."

"How do you know they are thieves?" said

Dermot.

"Because I know one of them of old. That man who was walking the fair with Sive a while ago, came to me once, several years ago, to borrow money. When I refused him the money he said he was hungry. I did not believe a word he said, and he knew I didn't. He pretended just now that he didn't know me, but he knew me just as well as I knew him. If Cormac comes up with him there will be an end to his travels and to his acting the gentleman for some time."

At that moment they heard a wild shout up in the direction of Dermot's house. Dermot's patience gave way.

"Oh!" he said, "poor Sive will be killed among them!" And the poor man ran as hard as he was

able to run.

Shiana caught him by the arm. "No fear of her," said he, "but it is not the same with you. The whole fair will be assembled there directly. There isn't a creature who has been at a loss by those fellows, who won't be there to attack them. It is better that you should be out of the way, lest someone should say that you were aware of their doings, and then the people might turn on you."

"God help my soul!" said Dermot. "What sent

them my way at all?"

"Sive's money did," said Shiana. "And they had no other way of getting at it."

"The shouting is stopping. They are quieting down. Let us go up," said Dermot.

"Are all the shoes sold, Michael?" said Shiana.

"Yes, all but a very few," said Michael.

"Well, put the horse to," said Shiana, "and drive on home."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ROBBERY.

Shiana and Grey Dermot went on steadily up to Dermot's house. They found nobody there but a gathering of women and children and old people, and the big tinker explaining to them what had happened.

"What is that he says?" said Dermot to one

of them.

"He says," said the man, "that the King's people have carried off Sive, and Nosey Cormac and his men have gone after them at full speed to take her from them and bring her home, because she and Cormac were going to be married."

They went into the house. They found nobody there. They tried the door of the room. It was locked on the inside. They looked at each other.

"Open the door, whoever is there!" said Dermot.

"You shut the house-door first," said Sive—for it was she. He did so.

Then she opened the room-door and appeared before them, wearing the red cloak, and in a state of terror.

"What the mischief is this," said she, "that is coming over the people, or are they all going out of their senses? I was sitting in that chair there. Sheeghy had gone out to see if he could see you. He had hardly gone out of sight of the door when I heard a great tramping and noise and confusion outside. I looked out, and what should I see but the whole fair making for the door in one body, the bailiff at the head of them with his drawn sword in his right hand and his blackthorn stick in his left, his two eyes blazing, and his mouth tightly closed. I sprang up to shut the door, but he was too quick for me. 'You need not fear, Sive,' said he, and on he went into the room, and two or three other men with him. He stabbed the beds with his sword, and he stabbed under them. In the twinkling of an eye he and they were out again. He turned to one of the men: 'They are gone,' said he; 'let us follow them!' And then such a shout was raised that I had to put my fingers in my ears."

"Look here," said Shiana, "I have some of the money. I got it in payment for shoes I sold."

And he pulled up out of his pocket a few gold pieces. He took one of them and rubbed it on the sleeve of his coat for a while. Very soon the fine yellow colour disappeared, and a grey leaden colour took its place. If you saw the look in Sive's eyes when she perceived that!

"Where was that money got?" said she.
"It was got," said Shiana, "in that box that was given to you to put in safe keeping. If they had only put a little more of the colour on it, perhaps the business they were at might not have been

discovered so soon. It is a pity Cormac was not a few moments earlier. Perhaps he may overtake them yet!"

"I don't understand what you are talking about,"

said Sive.

"What I am talking about," said Shiana, "is that you have had four thieves lodging here, and that the money in the box was false coin; that all the horses they bought in the fair to-day were paid for with false money; that most of the horses that were bought to-day were bought for the King, and that the whole district has been robbed. That is what I am talking about."

She turned away from him. They noticed her legs giving way under her. Her father caught her in his arms, or they would have had her on the floor in a dead lump.

SHEILA.—Poor girl! Three hundred pounds gone!

It was a terrible loss!

Nora.—Did she faint, Peg?

PEG.—Indeed she did, and her father was a long time slapping her hands and throwing water on her before she came to herself. And when she did, the first thing she said was, "Oh, bother you! Why need you hurt me and drown me? What do you want here?" said she to Shiana. "Go away home," said she. "You have no business here."

He did not pretend to know that she had spoken. "I am afraid," he said to Dermot, "that if they are caught they will come off badly. Cormac is angry. I think they must have carried off something of value from him. I never saw him go to work with so much fury. Even his own men felt a kind of fear of him. I can tell you they were

willing and ready and diligent, and that there was no fear that any of them would answer him back. I wouldn't be in that big man's place for anything I could name, if they come up with him."

"Such a piece of ill-luck never came on me before," said Dermot. "Here in this place I was born and reared, and my father before me, and my grandfather. Not a farthing's worth was ever laid to my charge, nor to the charge of anyone of the seven generations that came before me. Oh! Oh! Oh! That it should be my lot and my unlucky star that they should come in at my door without invitation or asking! That they should turn to this house rather than to any other in the town or near it! What will the neighbours say but that I was in league with their evil designs, and that I was helping them in them? If Cormac fails to overtake them—and if the people who have lost their money by this day have to come back here after a vain pursuit-why, everybody will say that I am to blame for it. and that unless I had given them some warning they would not have got off so quickly. They won't leave a stick over my head, or a whole bone in my body. Oh, dear, what a misfortune! What a disaster! What am I to do at all, at all? It is a hard thing to happen to me at the end of my life! Oh! I am ruined! Utterly ruined! What shall I do! What shall I do?"

"Shut your mouth and not be bothering us—that's what you'll do!" said Sive. "It is not you that are at a loss by it, but I. If I get him into my hands I'll tear the eyes out of his head. And now I think of it, what string was tying your tongue," said she to Shiana, "that you didn't speak when

we passed you as we went down the fair-green? Pretending that you didn't notice us! You saw us right well. However cleverly you pretended not to look at us, I saw your baleful eye upon us. Why didn't you speak then? I had not given him my money then. What kept your mouth shut? You had your tongue loose enough when it was too late. It was as easy for you to speak at that time as it was for you to speak afterwards. Whatever infernal hold you have upon Cormac so that you need only give him a whisper to drive him out of his senses, it would have been as well for you to have given him then the whisper that you gave him afterwards. if you had wanted to do the business properly. But you didn't. You let the time go by until I had given away my money and the rogue was gone. No man of his own gang could have arranged the thing more neatly for him than you arranged it. Wherever he is now, he must be very much obliged to you. And people saying that you surpass all the world in shrewdness! Aye, indeed!"

While all this talk was going on, Shiana was standing opposite the pair, with his hands behind his back. He stood gazing over at the wall, so that you would think that he could see through the wall to something that was behind it. His eyes were wide open, and you would think to look at them that they saw some sight that no other human eyes could see. His features never moved, and he never moved a muscle of his limbs, but stood as still as if there were neither life nor breath in him.

When people saw him in that state of rapt meditation, they used to feel a kind of dread and fear of him. Sive looked at him. She fell silent, in spite

of the vehemence that moved her. She looked at him again, and she actually moved back a little bit from him.

You would not think that he had heard a single word all the time she had been talking, nor that he ever noticed that she had ceased or that she had moved away from him.

It was nightfall. Cormac and his men had not returned. Some of those who had accompanied them, and who had failed to keep up with them, were returning one after another. Some of them were saying that the thieves had been caught, others that they had not. There was a crowd of them gathered in the middle of the road just outside Dermot's house, disputing and arguing. The big tinker was in the midst of them asking them questions.

Shiana started out of his reverie.

"Dermot," said he, "shut this door behind me and fasten it well"; and out he went into the midst of the people who were talking.

"Have they been caught?" said he.

"They have," said one.

"They have not," said another.

"But I say they have," said the first. "Did not my two eyes see Cormac's hand on the throat of that big fellow who was walking the fair to-day with Sive? Would you deny me the sight of my own eyes?"

"Talking of that," said a third, "I cannot understand what made Sive go walking the fair with him."

"Neither can I," said a fourth. "Nor can I understand what brought them to Dermot's house at all, walking in and out there, so that one would

think the place belonged to them. That was what deceived me, and others beside me. When I saw them so much at home in Dermot's house I had no distrust of them. They took a splendid colt from me. I would have been well pleased to get thirty pounds for him. When I heard of all the excitement, and the big sums of money being given for anything in the shape of a horse, I was astonished. I heard people saying that they were only buyers; that they had the King's money; that they got it easily and were spending it easily. I said to myself, of course, that I might as well have my pull out of it, as I had got the chance. I asked sixty pounds. I got it at once. A pocket full of little leaden plates! They have ruined me! My fine brave colt, after I had spent the year feeding him! If I had not seen them so much at home at Grey Dermot's house they would not have played that trick on me."

"That's the talk!" said another, with passion in his voice. "They played the same trick on me, and but for Grey Dermot and Sive they couldn't

have done it."

"All the more misfortune to Dermot," said Shiana, "since he did not look before him. They have made beggars of him and of Sive." And he told them the whole story from beginning to end, just

as it had taken place.

"The fact of the matter is," said he, "I fear it will break Dermot's heart, if it has not already done so, and that poor Sive will go stark mad. Three hundred pounds! All that the pair had ever saved! I do not remember such an act of plunder. I do not know in the world what they will do."

"By the deer!" said the owner of the colt, "bad

as our case is, theirs is worse. But for your saying it, I would not believe a word of it. But I am sure you have the truth of it. What else would have taken her out like a fool, walking the fair with him in that red cloak, but that she was quite sure that the match was made?"

"The wedding was to be in Dublin," said the big tinker. "No place nearer home would do. Good gracious me! I have been a long time in the world, and many a clever trick has been played upon me in my time, but such a trick as that I never saw played until to-day, and I don't suppose I shall ever see again."

"Which were the more, the tricks played on you or the tricks played by you?" said he of the colt.

"Really and truly," said the tinker, "I do not remember ever playing a trick upon anyone. No,

really."

He said it so innocently that they all laughed out. Sive heard the laugh. She at once concluded that the fun was at herself, for she had heard Shiana telling all about the match. She had heard him with shame and anger; but when she heard the laugh from the people on the road, she lost her temper completely. She rushed out and began at them. She heaped abuse on Shiana again, because he had not spoken in time, before she had given her money to Sheeghy. Then she heaped abuse on the big tinker because he was laughing at her.

"You thick-speaking clown of the broken pots!" said she, "you never had the right nor any one of your race during seven generations, to be making fun of me." Then she turned on him of the colt because he burst out laughing when he saw the

dressing Shiana and the big tinker were getting. "It is a very just deed," said she, "that it should happen to you as it did, and even if it had happened to you seven times worse. It was easy for you to know when you were offered sixty pounds for your ragged, starved, badly-bred little colt, that it was not an honest man that ever offered such a sum for him. You could not help it. The greed was too strong in your heart. Sixty pounds for a little shaggy colt without shape or form, with no more breeding in him than an old sheep! Confound you, you miserable, mean little wretch! How finely you can talk!"

"Hush, Sive!" said he of the colt, "don't be uneasy. There have been so many senseless people at this fair to-day that I am quite sure that somewhere among them there will very soon be found a fool who will marry you without a fortune."

She made a spring, and before he knew what was coming she had her two hands fixed in his beard and was pulling it hard. She pulled it one way and she pulled it the other. He gave three or four groans, like a bull-calf when the knife is being put to his throat. He did not strike her, though it took all his patience to refrain. He put out both hands, and flung her from him, and ran away. Her fingers did not come away empty. You would think they would all fall dead with laughter when they saw the choking the man of the colt had got, and when they saw the beard on Sive's fingers.

Meanwhile more of the people were returning from chasing the thieves. According as they came each asked what caused the fun, or what was going on. They soon lost sight of their own troubles, and the whole conversation and discussion turned upon the catastrophe which had befallen Sive and Dermot.

Sheila.—Indeed, Peg, I suppose, but for that, it would have happened to them as Dermot said. They would have been killed or burnt alive in the house.

KATE.—But for Shiana they would have been in a bad way.

Sheila.—How is that, Kate? Though he told Dermot to shut the door, did not Sive open it herself?

KATE.—It wouldn't have mattered whether it was open or shut, but for the skill with which Shiana put the story of the match and of the three hundred pounds into the mouths of the people. That was what saved them from the people's rage.

PEG.—And though Sive did not perceive it, she helped Shiana very much in the matter. When they had been looking at her and listening to her for a while, they said to each other that she was surely going out of her mind. Two women of her neighbours came and coaxed her in home. Then the rumour spread that she was stark mad and had to be tied. That put them out of all danger. Everyone believed that they were not guilty, and that they had not had any knowledge of what the thieves had done, and that, in fact, no one had suffered more by the whole business than they had.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CORMAC TELLS HIS STORY.

The night was passing and Cormac was not returning, nor any exact account from him. Those who had lost their horses began to feel troubled and ashamed. They had heard what Sive said to the owner of the colt, and they knew she was right. There was not one of them to whom her remarks did not apply as aptly as to him of the colt. They felt that no one had much pity for them, and they had not much pity for each other. When the big sums were offered to them they knew they were getting more than their right-and they took it. By and by, when the truth came out, they felt in their hearts that they had got what they deserved because they had consented to what was wrong. They slipped away home, gloomy and sore at heart, sad and disappointed, disgusted with themselves and with their day's work.

Sheila.—Now you see there are many ways of making false money besides making it of little slate flags, by witchcraft.

KATE.—There are, to be sure. And see also that it seldom happens that a man is found honest enough to come a week later and put the right money instead of the false, as Michael Redmonddid.

ABBIE.—And as usually happens, see how little he was thanked. He saved both his character and his property.

KATE.—Which character, Abbie—for honesty or for witchcraft?

ABBIE.—Well said, Kate. I think he saved both.

NORA.—I wonder, Peg, if there was any hope that the gentleman would come back and give real money to those people to whom he had given the base coin.

Peg.—I fear, Nora, that if he did, he would be set down by those same people as being quite as

mad as they thought Sive was.

ABBIE.—Oh, Peg, how quietly Nora pokes a bit of fun at us! "I wonder if there was any hope that he would come back," says she. As if she had the slightest doubt in her mind that there

was no hope whatever of it!

Nora.—Oh, really and truly, Abbie, and as I hope no evil to my soul, I am in downright earnest. Here is the point that puzzles me. Michael Redmond made money, by witchcraft, out of little slate flags, and gave them to the landlady in order to get his hat from her. But he was not easy in his mind until he returned at the end of a week and brought her real money, and neither he nor anyone else saw anything extraordinary in that. But if that gentleman were to come back and give real money to the people to whom he had given the bad money, they would say he was as mad as they considered Sive to be. That is what puzzles me.

PEG.—Well, you see, Nora, there is this difference between the two cases. Michael Redmond was an honest man, whatever witchcraft he had, or had not. That "gentleman" was a thief,

whatever gentility he had, or had not.

KATE.—Upon my word, it's my opinion that the greatest gentlemen are the greatest thieves. There is that gentleman who evicted the MacKeowns. It is said that he has ten thousand a year over in England. That would not satisfy him, but he must needs come over here to the poor MacKeowns and fling them out in a deluge of rain on Christmas Eve. The old couple were there, and the young couple, and nine children. The eldest was the same age as Peg, and the youngest was three weeks old. When they were out, and the rain falling in torrents, young John MacKeown made a shed for them against the ditch as a shelter. The gentleman came and pulled down the shed.

Nor.—Oh, dear, Kate! Surely he did not do that?

KATE.—Indeed he did. The bailiff told him there was some point of law in it, and that he would have the same trouble in evicting them from the shed as he had in evicting them from the house. He pulled down the shed, at all events.

Then the poor old man cried; and when the gentleman saw him crying, "See," said he, "how the old cock cries."

SHEILA.—What does that mean, Kate?

KATE.—" Feuc man soitean an rean cocaise."

SHEILA.—Oh, to think of it! When it was he that was making him cry!

ABBIE.—I should be inclined to say to that gentleman what Mary Partolan said to the man who had robbed her of a year's butter, when she found she had no legal remedy. "Upon my word," said she, "it is a good thing that there is a hell."

Peg.—O fie, Abbie! how did she know but that she might go there herself?

ABBIE.—I dare say she did not say it from her heart.

She was angry, and she had cause.

SHEILA.—I don't think anybody need have said it to that gentleman who evicted the people and pulled down the shed.

PEG.—Why not, Sheila?

SHEILA.—Because God (praise be to Him!) will do it without being asked.

PEG.—What will he do, Sheila?

SHEILA.—He will send that gentleman to hell.

Peg.—How do we know, Sheila, that the gentleman will not do penance?

Sheila.—His penance won't do unless he builds up the house again and puts the people back into it, safe and sound, as they were before; and gives them money for the damage he did them.

KATE.—Bravo, Sheila! That is the way to talk! What a pity you don't make the laws for us; you would soon put the gentlemen into their proper place, and that is badly wanted. But look here, Peg, surely gentlemen never do penance, do they?

PEG.—Why, what put that into your head, Kate?

KATE.—Well, I have always heard of their bad doings; of the wrong and the ruin that they inflict upon the poor—crushing and grinding them, and turning them out into cold and wandering—and I never heard that any of them repented or made reparation. It is the poor who are always doing penance. It is a strange thing.

Peg.—Oh, indeed, Kate, gentry do penance, too.

St. Gobnet of Ballyvourney was a king's daughter, and St. Colum Cille was a king's son. Sheila.—Did you hear that, Abbie?

ABBIE.—Oh, I heard it long ago, Sheila. She was a king's daughter, and when she left her father's house the angel told her not to stop to live in any place until she should find nine white deer asleep. She came to some place and she found three of them. She stayed there a little while. Then she came to Killgobnet, where she found six. She stayed there for some time, and it was then that the place was called Killgobnet. Then she came to Ballyvourney, where she found the nine. There she spent the rest of her life, and she is buried there.

KATE.—I'll engage the MacKeowns will be out a long time before the gentleman who evicted them will repent and put them back into their home.

Nora.—I suppose the gentry who live now are different from the gentry who lived long ago.

Peg.—Indeed, I think it will be a long time before a saint is found among them.

Abbie.—Well, how did it go with Nosey Cormac, Peg?

PEG.—There was neither tale nor tidings of him for a week after the fair day. Everything settled down. Neither Sive nor her father was seen outside the door during the week. Those who had suffered most by the thieves' work were those who spoke least about it. Those who had had nothing to lose were constantly talking. Each of them was boasting that if he had had a horse to sell he would not have parted with him quite so greenly.

After a week Cormac returned. Shiana's house was the first he visited. Shiana came out to meet him just as he had gone to meet John Kittach that other day.

"Well!" said Shiana.

"Three of them have been hanged," said Cormac. "Sheeghy, or whatever his name is, escaped. For all our speed we failed to overtake them until we reached the city. I went at once to the King's men, where I was well known, and I told my story. You never saw people so much astonished as they were. 'Why,' said they, 'a man came here a while ago and told us that same story, and showed us three of the thieves, and we arrested them at once, and probably they will be hanged to-morrow. He said that they were not the most guilty, but the man who was their leader, and the leader of more of their sort in Munster, a man named Shiana—a man who had been manufacturing false coin for a long time. And by the same token, that it was generally known in the district that he was in abject poverty until within the last five or six years, and that now he was the richest man in Munster, or perhaps in Ireland. And. said they, 'there is an order from the King to prepare an armed force to go and seize upon that Shiana, whoever he is, and to bring him here in custody.' 'Where is the man who told that story?' said I. 'He is here within,' said they. We went in. There was not a trace of him. They ran in all directions in search of him. He was not to be found any more than if the ground had swallowed him. 'Where are the other three?' said I. 'In the jail,' said they. 'Let us see them and question them,' said I. We went in and questioned them, each separately.

answers were the same thus far; that the base coin was being made somewhere in the city, but that none of them knew the place; that they were getting five shillings in the pound for passing the coin at fairs and markets; that they had made their living as pedlars before this business came their way; that the base coin used to be sent to their dwellings; that they had never seen the place where it was made, nor the person who was head of the business.

"You never saw anything like the astonishment of the King's men when they heard that. Then I told them how you set me on the track of the thieves, and I explained to them how, but for your action, it would have been impossible to catch them at all.

"On the following day I had to go before the judge and tell him the story in detail. Then they were sentenced to be hanged, on account of the act they had done, and for doing it under the King's name. And detectives were appointed and sent out in all directions, to see if they could come up with honest Sheeghy, whoever he is and wherever he is, and bring him to hand. Searchers were also appointed to find out the place where the base coin is being made, and, since there must be others at work beside the four, to hunt up and catch the rest of them before they could do any further mischief. There is many a sharp hound at the rascal's heels by this time, I promise you, and if he escapes them it will be a wonder to me. When they had heard how cleverly you acted on the fair day, and how closely the four were pursued, what they all said was, that it was a great pity you were not down there among them, where you would have an opportunity of turning your talents to some account."

"I fear, Cormac," said Shiana, "that when you were giving them an account of my talents, if you did not exaggerate the truth you did not diminish it. But I dare say that, but for the quickness with which you followed at the heels of that big fellow. and but for your arriving in the city so soon after him, I should be with them now-not exactly for the sake of my talents. He seems to have made a desperate attempt against me. It is a pity the like of him should be at large. The city men will do badly if they fail to catch him, now that his name is known all over the country on account of this deed. And when I think of it I am really surprised that he should have been such a fool as to connect the King's name with the act. He ought to have known that he could not escape long under the King's name."

"My opinion is," said Cormac, "that he knew well what he was about, and that he did the work of the

fair day with a deliberate purpose."

"How is that?" said Shiana.

"As I understand the matter," said Cormac, "he was aiming chiefly at you, and here is how he meant to get at you, if he had succeeded. As soon as he should have finished the business of the fair, he and Sive would go down to Dublin. He would leave the other three in care of the horses, to lead them along until they should meet some of their own gang on the road, who would take them away to dispose of them at other fairs. When he reached the city he would go before the judge and swear against you the deed he himself had done, saying that it was you who had the base coin, and that it was you that were buying the horses under the pretence that they were for the King, and that he himself had no other

business in the place but to make the match and to take his wife home. Then when he had had his will in settling matters for you and had put the hemp about your neck, he would marry Sive, and then see who would say he was a thief! It would not have been very difficult for him to make the city people believe the story when he would tell them how little money you had a short time ago and the greatness of your wealth now."

"No one has ever said that he got base coin from me," said Shiana.

"Neither did he get it," said Cormac. "When I was told that it was you that gave the rent to the widow that day long ago, I tested every piece of it, and it was all as true as if it had come out that very morning from the King's own mint."

"I suppose," said Shiana, "if it had been base, things would have gone hard with me," and he gave

a little laugh.

"There was no danger that anything would go hard with you through me," said Cormac, "as long as you were doing no wrong." It just happened that he looked Shiana in the face, and he stopped. Sheila.—Why did he stop, Peg? I should think

that, whomsoever that look of Shiana's would startle or not startle, it would be very hard for it to startle Nosey Cormac. I'll bet if John of the Fair were there it would not startle him. No, indeed; no more than it would startle a sow pig if she were there.

PEG.—Why, the way the matter stood with Cormac was that Shiana knew an ugly secret about him.

A short time after that day on which he came to take possession from the widow, Shiana found

out all about the bribe, and Cormac knew he did. He was unable to make his mind easy or to sleep at night until he went to speak to Shiana and asked him not to lodge a complaint against him. Shiana promised he would not, provided Cormac promised not to take a bribe again. He promised that most willingly.

SHEILA.—What a barefaced fellow! "You need not have dreaded me as long as you did no wrong." It was no wonder that he was startled. If Sive had known that, she would have understood what the grip was that Shiana had of him.

PEG.—He had that grip of him firmly, and signs by, he had but to beckon to him in order to send him to work, be the work hard or easy, be the time late or early, and no matter how cold or wet the weather.

"Do you think is there any chance of his being

caught?" said Shiana.

"The pursuit is hot at all events," said Cormac.

"There are men on his trail from whom it is hard to escape, I promise you. They say themselves that no thief has ever escaped them. If this fellow escapes them he will take the palm."

"Have you had any talk with Grey Dermot since

you came back?" said Shiana.

"No," said he, "but I have heard that Sive has left home, and that there is no account of her. I was intending to go down there now to see whether she has returned, or whether there is any truth at all in it."

"I'll go with you," said Shiana. "I had not heard a word of it. The poor man is to be pitied." They went down.

CHAPTER XIX.

CORMAC RETURNS TO THE CITY.

Dermot was not in the doorway before them. The door was shut. They opened it and went in. They saw neither Sive nor Dermot. There was a strange old woman sitting near the fire. She raised her head and looked at them, and she bent it again without speaking. They knew her. She was a neighbour. Deaf Poll was the name she was called; still she was not so very deaf, but she was very slow.

"Where is the man of the house, Poll?" said

Cormac.

"He is not very well," said she, slowly.

"Is he in bed?" said Cormac.

"He is," said she, "and Art's daughter Mary is taking care of him."

Just then the nurse opened the room door.

"You are welcome," said she.

"What ails this man, Mary?" said Cormac.

"I fear, Cormac," said she, "that he has got a little attack of fever—God bless the hearers! He fell sick the day after the fair, when he found Sive gone. When the priest heard of the dreadful doings of those thieves at the fair he came here himself, and when he found Dermot sick and no one here to give him a drink, he sent for me, and I came."

"Might we go in to see him?" said Shiana.

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said she.

Cormac was already within, without leave. SHELLA.—I would not doubt him!

Peg.—" How goes it, Dermot?" said Cormac.

"Ask something else!" said Dermot. "Where did you leave her?" said he. "Did he take her from you? You are a good-for-nothing man to let her go with him."

"He has been like that since I came," said the nurse. "His tongue never rests; he is always

talking."

"Do you know me, Dermot?" said Shiana.

"Do I know you! It is as right for me to know you as it is for you to know me. It is as right for you to know me as it is for me to know you. It is as right for me to know you as it is for you to know me-" He went on in that way repeating the same words over and over, and taking care to invert their order alternately, and whenever he happened to miss any word or not to make the inversion exactly in order, he went back upon the expressions until he satisfied his mind that they were in order as he wished them. Then he would quicken his speech as if he had laid a wager as to how many times he could repeat the words without drawing breath. He would strain himself so much that you would think he would choke himself for want of breath. After a while he ceased from those rushings of speech, and looked over into the corner of the room.

"It is a shame for you all," said he. "There is that poor man over yonder with his head bursting with pain and none of you would look after him." SHEILA.—Who was he, Peg?

PEG.—There was nobody there, Sheila. The poor

man was only raving.

KATE.—I suppose it was in his own head the pain was.

PEG.—In his own head, of course.

KATE.—Indeed, I saw our James in that same way long ago, when he had the sore finger. It was his left thumb that was sore. He was raving with the violence of the pain, and he used to be calling my mother and Nell, and asking them to "look after that little boy yonder in the corner, for that he had a very sore thumb."

Nora.—Well then, Peg.

PEG.—They remained a long time listening to him, but they failed to get any sensible talk out of him.

"What do you think of him, Mary?" said Shiana to the nurse.

"I don't think he is in danger," said she. "It is a good sign of the illness that the raving is so lively. I have not noticed any torpor upon him. He suffers from thirst, but not very much, and I am giving him good two-milks' whey."

They came out of the room.

"Is there any account of Sive," said Shiana, "or does anyone know in what direction she has gone?"

"No one but Poll, here, saw her going," said the nurse. "Poll was out at dawn on the morning after the fair. The conduct of the thieves and the confusion that followed it had given the poor woman a disturbed night. She was sitting outside the door of her cabin at the grey dawn. She saw a woman leave this house; she was bent forward; she had the hood of her cloak on her head. Where should she face but toward the cabin, not expecting that Poll would be up so early. She did not see Poll until she was close up to her. They looked at each other. Neither of them spoke. Poll seldom speaks unless she is spoken to, and she is not very quick at it even

then. Sive passed on along the road to the north-east, bending forward for speed. It was the Dublin road. No one has seen her since, dead or alive, and I have not heard that any one else saw her that morning except Poll here."

"Why did you not speak to her, Poll?" said Cor-

mac.

"Indeed, I don't know," said Poll, slowly.

"As sure as there is a ferrule on a tramp's stick," said Cormac, "it is in pursuit of that Sheeghy she is gone—and it is not through love of him, nor for his welfare. Many a clever trick he has played during his life, but I give him my hand and word that the trick he played upon Sive on the fair day is the sorest trick to him that he ever played. If it is in pursuit of him she has gone,—and it is—if he were to go into an auger-hole to hide from her, it won't do him any good. She will come up with him and put a narrow necktie on him as sure as he has a throat. Cut off my ear from my head if she doesn't. I think if he had known what sort she is he would have passed her by. It is too late for him now."

"Nonsense, Cormac, nonsense!" said the nurse. "Don't be making yourself ridiculous. What business would Sive have in Dublin? What could she do there? Whom does she know there? How would she find her way through that city, she that was never within a hundred miles of it? Whereas there is not even a rat-hole in any part of the city which that fellow is not acquainted with. Believe me if he finds her in pursuit of him, either he or some one of his gang will very soon put an end to her—if it is in that direction she has gone, which indeed I

suppose it is not, of course."

"Wait awhile," said Cormac. "No other purpose would take her from home but to hunt that fellow down and bring him to justice. I don't think that within living memory there has been anything done that was so hateful or so mean or so unjust as the act that he did against her and her father. She would rather be cut into small bits than let it go with him unpunished,—and small blame to her."

"Why, then, man alive, if you are so thoroughly convinced that she is gone off with that intention, why don't you rush off at once and follow her?"

said the nurse.

"So I will, never you fear," said he. "I only wanted to know exactly in what direction she had gone. I suppose you will stay here until this man is recovering, or at least out of danger?"

"Yes," said she, "I will; the priest told me to

stay."

"And you, Shiana," said he, "if you are not very busy would it not be as well for you to come with me?"

"It is not necessary," said Shiana. "There are

enough of yourselves."

"I know," said Cormac, "that the King's men would like to make your acquaintance, and perhaps it might be easy there for you to find a way of living which would be more profitable than shoemaking."

"The shoemaking will do for another while," said

Shiana.

"Well! God give you all a good day!" said Cormac. "I have a quick start of it again, without as much as taking the road-dust off my shoes. What a pity I have not all the rascally thieves in Ireland in one rope and on one gallows! What a squeeze I

would give them! We would have peace then for a time."

"You would have a large sheaf!" said the nurse. Sheila.—Dear me, Peg, didn't he remember the bribe? Peg.—What bribe, Sheila dear?

SHEILA.—The bribe he consented to take for the widow's house that time when he was going to evict her, and she had not the rent, until Shiana gave it to her.

Peg.—I don't know, Sheila. People often have a bad memory for a thing which they do not wish to keep in mind.

SHEILA.—He ought to have been ashamed.

Peg.—It is people without shame that can most easily do what suits them.

Sheila.—Perhaps so. But I do not admire them, those people without shame. It would have become him far better to have kept silent, and not to have been doing the "white cat's abstinence" about dishonesty.

ABBIE.—He was just like that man in Killarney who was going into the fight. He had a big thick nose, just as Cormae had. People used to call him Bachall¹ on account of the nose. His father called out to him just as he was entering the fight: "Donald, my boy," said the father, "make haste and call some fellow Bachall before anyone shall have had time to call you so." That was the way with Cormac. He thought the best way in which he could escape the reproach of dishonesty was by calling some one else a thief.

SHEILA.—Indeed, Peg, that would not save him.

^{1.} bacall, a knoh; esp. the knob on the top of a stick.

Couldn't he be called the name afterwards as well as if he had not called anybody else by it?

- Peg.—I suppose he considered it a great matter to have the first of it, to fire the first shot, and not to be down at the first gap. And what would people say but that surely he had no dread of the name, for if he had he would not be so ready to mention it.
- KATE.—I suppose that was the way with little Denis when he stole James's knife. There was nobody so energetic in the search for the knife as he was himself, and he had it in his pocket, the little wretch!

SHEILA.—How was it found, Kate?

KATE.—It was I that noticed it in his pocket. He had the pocket hanging outside his coat like a little worm-bag. I laid my hand on the little bag, and the knife was inside it.

SHEILA.—The poor fellow! what a start you gave him!

KATE.—You may say I did. He turned every colour
and began to cry.

SHEILA.—Was he sent away?

KATE.—No. Nell defended him. She said that some one must have put the knife into the pocket without his knowledge, for fun, and my father said she was right.

Abbie.—He thought that by pretending to search for it earnestly there would be no danger of his

being suspected. Wasn't he clever?

Peg.—Well, he was only a child, Abbie. He had no sense, and I dare say the knife was not worth much.

KATE.—No, it wasn't; and what James did then was to make him a present of it, and I was mad

at his doing it. I'd rather throw it into the fire than give it to him, after his doing his little bit of deceit so shrewdly. Small as the knife was, perhaps, if he had succeeded, the suspicion of it might have fallen on some one else, and then see what a nice piece of work he would have done.

Peg.—You are right there, Kate. "The effect of a

wrong act extends very far."

Abbie.—Well now, Peg, go on with the story. These people would keep you there till to-morrow morning talking and arguing and disputing and discussing.

Nora.—Indeed, Abbie, you were not without your share of the discussion; you did not let it go

with them altogether.

Peg.—Cormac went off again, "without taking the road-dust off his shoes," as he said. When he had gone off, Shiana went back again into the room where the sick man was.

"What a long time you have been about coming!" said Dermot. "It's the match from November till May you have made of it. Half the country would have been married while you have been at it. Where is she now? She was there just a moment ago. 'A wife is better than a fortune.' A quiet, sensible girl, if you don't make her angry. Oh! fie! don't strike! confound you, don't strike! Look at that!"

"Is there any money in the house?" said Shiana

to the nurse.

"Not a brown halfpenny," said she.

"Here," said he, "I got some leather from him a few days ago. It is as well for me to pay for it now," and he handed her some money.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FORTUNE-TELLER.

Shiana came on the following day to see how the sick man was, and he took away some more of the leather that was in the shop and paid for it. It was well he did. That left some money to the nurse, so that when Dermot came to the crisis, she was able to provide the food and drink which were necessary, and to give them to him according as he required.

Very soon she had him sitting up beside the fire, and extremely eager for food. But indeed she used not to give it to him, except as much as she considered was good for him, and you never saw such fighting and arguing as he used to have with her trying to get more.

According as he got better the neighbours used to be gathering in and making enquiries, and telling how grieved they were when they heard of his illness, and how glad they were to find him recovering.

When Shiana found him getting really better and out of danger he did not come so often, and after a little time his visits ceased.

The nurse remained longer than she thought necessary, but the priest was the cause of that, for he was expecting from time to time and from day to day that Sive would return home. At last the nurse got a call from the opposite side of the parish, and she had to go.

The only thing they could do then was to ask poor old Poll to come every morning and light the fire and get a bit of food for Dermot. It was not left altogether to her. There was scarcely a day that Michael's mother used not to drop in there. And the day she was not there Short Mary herself used to be there. And what the neighbours used to say was that Dermot used to make greater progress toward recovery during the piece of a day that she would spend talking to him, than during the whole of the rest of the time. Dermot himself used to say that he felt as if a cloud were lifted off his heart when he used to see her coming in at his door.

What everyone said was that it was well for him that Sive was not at home near him while he was sick, because he could not possibly have recovered while she was there, for if he were just at a crisis and that anything happened to cross her, she would fly into a rage, and bring a relapse upon him, as surely as her name was Sive.

That was the opinion of the neighbours, but that was not Dermot's own opinion. In his estimation, there was nothing keeping him on the flat of his back but the fact that she was not coming home, nor any tidings of her. From morning till night there used to be no subject of conversation between himself and the neighbours who came in but "where was she?" or "what was keeping her?" or "whether she was dead or alive." "If she was alive, why didn't somebody hear news of her? If she was dead, why was not an account of her death coming from some quarter? Surely she could not be killed without some one's knowing it. If she were killed in the middle of the night and her body thrown into some hole, surely it would be found the next day, and the news would spread through the country, and Sheeghy would

be caught, if it were he that had done the deed, and he would be hanged. If he were as clever again as he was, he could not escape Cormac."

That was how he used to spend the time, debating the matter as long as there was anybody in the house to listen to him. When he was alone, he used to talk to himself and argue with himself and dispute with himself. Sometimes, while thus disputing with himself, he would raise his voice, so that Poll heard him, and she used to be under the impression that there were two or three people with him, he used to make so much noise.

In spite of his grief he had a good appetite, and he was recovering very fast. He was soon at the door, with his shoulder to the jamb as usual; but there was a want of colour in his face, compared with what there had been, and you could see that his clothes were not so well filled out as they used to be before the poor man got ill. You could see that some of the flesh was gone and a great deal of the fat. The shoulder was thin in the coat: the arm was thin in the sleeve; the thigh was thin in the breeches; the poor man had too much room in his clothes, and he used to feel the wind searching his bones all round in the empty passages between the skin and the clothes, so that he could not stay long at the door without coming now and then to the fire to warm himself.

One day, about a fortnight after he had left his bed, he came to the door, with the smell of the fire strong upon his clothes. No sooner did he look up the road than he saw a woman coming down the height towards him. At the first look he was rather startled, because he thought she was very

like Sive. He never took his eyes off her until she came close to him. She was a coarse, largeboned woman, and she wore a frieze cloak, with the hood over her head; with her left hand she was holding the two sides of the hood closed over her mouth, so that her nose and one of her eyes were all that Dermot could see of her features.

She made straight for the door, and in through the door, and if he had not moved aside from her she would have knocked him down. Up she went to the fire, and she sat down in Dermot's own chair. She turned to the fire and spread herself and both her hands over it to receive the heat, and you would think she was in want of it.

Poll raised her head in the corner and looked at the stranger long and sullenly. Dermot stood still in the middle of the house staring at the back of her head. When she had warmed herself she put her left hand again to the hood of her cloak and closed it over her mouth. She looked out of her one eye at Poll. Then she looked at Dermot.

"There is a hen crowing in this house!" said she, and one could hardly tell whether it was a man's voice or a woman's. "There is a hen crowing in this house!" she said again.

"I have not heard her crowing," said Dermot.

"There is a hen crowing in this house!" said she.
"Sruy, sroy! sruy, sroy! sruy, sroy!"

"Where did you come from to us, daughter?" said Dermot.

"Sruv, srov! sruv, srov! "said she. "Long has been my journey to ye, coming for your good. That is a great wrong, that I should be sent all the way from Ulster to protect ye against

your enemies, as if a person nearer home and of nearer kin to ye could not be found to do it."

"Who intends to injure us?" said Dermot.

She sprang to her feet and faced him. He did not look her between the eyes, because he could see only one of her eyes. That was enough for him. There was no sleepiness in that one eye, nor any short-sightedness. She held out her right hand towards him. He drew a piece of money out of his pocket and put it in the middle of her palm. She blew a puff of her breath upon it. I suppose it was larger than she expected it to be, for she was thrown off her guard. Her hold slipped off the hood of her cloak, and her face was revealed. She was blind of one eye, and her mouth was twisted back almost to where the ear ought to be, and the ear was gone. Dermot drew back from her, and I tell you he was afraid.

"Who intends to injure you?" said she. "Fire and water intend to injure you," said she. "Disease and death intend to injure you," said she, "There are things bent on injuring you," said she, "which you little expect. But that I was not far from you day or night for the past three weeks, you would know by this time who the people are who are bent on injuring you," said she to Dermot. "And I should think," said she, "that it was enough for me to be protecting you and not to be protecting your daughter also, far asunder as you and she are."

"Where is she?" said Dermot. "Or what is keeping her away? Or why did she go without sending tale or tidings home here to me so that I might know whether she was dead or alive? She has

treated me very badly." And he had his hand down again in his breeches' pocket, handling another coin. The woman saw that as well as if she had twenty eyes.

"You will soon hear from her," said she, with her hand again held out, "and I am not the person to be thanked for it, nor herself any more than I."

He put the second piece into her hand.

"Where is she?" said he. "Or when will she come?"

"She will come," said she, "when you will least expect her. She will come when you will have least welcome for her."

"What is that you say, woman?" said Dermot.
"Or who told you that she would not be welcome here whenever she might come?"

"I say what I know," said she, "and what I know is not agreeable, but if it isn't that is not my fault. It was not I that sent her from home. It was not I that put bad company in her way. If I did my best to protect her from her enemy my trouble was great, and I have had little by it."

"When will she come?" said Dermot.

She only put her left hand to the hood of her cloak again and tightened it over her mouth as she had it at first, and rushed out at the door without saying another word.

SHEILA.—Och, was not she a surly sort!

Nora.—I wonder, Peg, how she lost her eye?

PEG.-I don't know in the world, Nora.

ABBIE.—By her own bad talk, I'll engage.

Nora.—Perhaps something happened to her like what happened to that fortune-telling woman that came to Nell Buckley.

ABBIE.—What happened to her, Nora?

NORA.—Kate will tell you, she will tell it best.

ABBIE.—What happened to her, Kate?

KATE.—Why, nothing happened to her but half what she deserved, the rogue! Nell was married only three weeks. She was at home in the house, and Edmund was out looking after the cows, as one of them had just calved. After a while he came in, and Nell was crying. He asked her what was the matter with her. It was some time before she told him that a fortune-teller had been asking her for money, and that because she did not give her the money she had said Nell would be a widow before the year would be out. While Edmund was out minding the eows he had noticed the strange woman going away from the house, and he knew what road she had taken. He did not do one bit but to take the whip that was hanging beside the door, and to stick it up the sleeve of his coat, and to rush out at the door. He was gone before Nell knew what he was doing. He soon overtook the woman. "Why," said he, "did you say to my wife that I should die within a year?" "I would not have said it," said she, "but for my knowing it well." "Who told it to you?" said he. "My fairy lover told it to me," said she. He caught her by the back of the head and drew the whip out of his sleeve, and he flogged her there with the whip as soundly as ever Conthe-Master flogged any of the scholars he had at his school. When he had flogged her well he let her go. "There!" said he. "Isn't it a

great wonder that your fairy lover did not tell you I'd give you that dressing? Be off now, and you have something to tell him that he did not know before. And if I ever see you coming near my house again I'll give you a greater adventure than that to tell to your fairy lover." Nell was frightened lest the woman should curse them. But Edmund used to say that he would care no more for that than if she were to sing to them.

Nora.—Oh, dear! I would not like to have her

cursing me, at any rate.

KATE.—What harm could her curses do you when you had not done anything wrong?

Nora.—How would I know but some of them might fall on me in some way?

KATE.—It is on herself they would fall when you had not deserved them from her. Is it not, Peg?

Nora.-Why, perhaps I might imagine that I had not deserved them, and still perhaps I might. Whether I should have deserved them or not. I would not like to have her calling them down upon me.

KATE.—Oh, but when you could not help it! When she would come and say that you were to die before the year was up, and that her fairy

lover told it to her!

Sheila.—How did she come to have a fairy lover, Peg? Isn't it a great wonder that the fairy would not have something else to do besides following the like of her!

KATE.—I heard some one say that the fairies are the fallen angels and the demons of the air,

but Edmund says that there are no such creatures at all.

Nora.—But if there are not, how could they be seen?

Peg.—Did you ever see one of them yourself, Nora? Nora.—Indeed I did not, thank God! But there are many people that have seen them.

PEG.—Tell me one.

Nora.—Jack Herlihy. I was listening to him telling it.

KATE.—Ach, the half-fool!

Nora.—Whether he is a half-fool or not, he saw the ghost.

SHEILA.—Where, Nora?

Nora.—Why, he was sent to drive the cows after they had been milked up to Tureen-an-Chassurla on Sunday night. There was a house full of people gathered there for the evening. Soon Jack rushed in, in a great fright, with his eyes shining like candles through terror and panic. "Why, what ails you, Jack?" said they .-"Oh! by gum," said he, "I have seen a ghost!" -" When did you see it, Jack?" said they.-"Oh!" said he, "just at the meeting of day and night-it was rather early in the eveningit was day more than it was night-it was not dark-in fact it was in the middle of the bright day."-I promise you there was a laugh.-"What did she say to you, Jack?" said they. -"By gum!" said he, "but she looked at me in a most woeful manner." "And what did you say to her, Jack?" said they .- "By gum!" said he, "but I thought it was better to run." "What was she like, Jack?" said

they.—"She was," said he, "a ghost of a pig, in the form of the vamp of a stocking."

KATE.—Oho! Why, what had he seen, Nora?

Nora.—That is exactly what they were all asking each other, when who should walk in but Jack's father, with his big grey coat on, and his striped cap. No sooner did Jack see him than he roared, "Oh! here she is coming in to ye!" "Oh, shut your mouth, you fool!" said the father.

KATE.—And where was the pig, then?

Nora.—Really, I don't know, Kate. All I know is that that's the account he gave of the ghost he saw.

PEG.—I dare say he used to hear people saying that a ghost in the shape of a pig was worse to see than one in the shape of any other animal, and that in his terror he thought it was a thing in the shape of a pig that was before him.

KATE.—And sure he said himself it was a thing "in the shape of the vamp of a stocking" that he saw, when he saw the striped cap and the big

grey coat!

Nora.—I really don't know what he saw, or what he imagined it to be, but that was what he said:

"a ghost of a pig, in the shape of the vamp of

a stocking," said he.

KATE.—Oh, bad manners to him, the ape! But for his being a fool I should say it would be a just deed to give him some of that whip we were speaking of. It might put a stop to some of his ravings.

SHEILA.—Didn't I hear you say, Peg, that the priest said that fortune-tellers have no knowledge of the future, but that they only pretend to have it?

PEG.—So he did; and they have not, any more than that woman had who said that Edmund would die within a year.

SHEILA.—I suppose he did not put her eye out, as somebody had done to the woman that came to Dermot.

CHAPTER XXI.

A MATCH FOR SIVE.

PEG.—Whatever it was that put her eye out, the woman who came to Dermot was blind of one eye. And if the eye that was gone was as piercing as the eye she still had, it was well for Dermot that she had not the two eyes when she looked at him, or she might have given him a relapse. The poor man was not able to eat a morsel of food for the rest of that day, for thinking of that one eye, and of the hen, and of the "sruv, srov!" and of the bad company that his daughter had met with; so that Poll went out and called some of the neighbours, and they came in, and they said the priest ought to be sent for before nightfall for fear the man might get bad, and that they would have to call the priest in the middle of the night.

The priest was sent for and he came. When he heard from Dermot about the fortune-teller he laughed.

"I know that rogue of a woman well," said he. "She was never in Ulster, nor one-half the distance

from home. I know where she was born and reared, and a bad rearing she was. She has no trade or way of living but to be going from place to place pretending that she has this supernatural knowledge, which, of course, she has not, any more than that hob has. If people would have sense and not be giving her money she would soon have to take up some other calling. But though the people are often told so, they will not take advice, and my talk is useless. It is no good for me to be at them."

"And, Father," said Dermot, "how did she find out that there was a hen crowing in this house? Or how did she find out that Sive was from home? Or how did she find out that I was myself in danger?"

"Nonsense, Dermot!" said the priest. "There is nothing easier than to find out things of that sort when one makes up one's mind to do so. Did not the whole country know the terrible work that was done here on the fair day? Did not the whole country know that Sive was from home, and that you were down with a fever?—God bless the hearers! What was to prevent her from going here and there among the people and finding out everything about you? It is a fine easy way of making money."

"But how would she find out that there was a hen crowing in the house, Father?" said Dermot.

"I suppose," said the priest, "if there was a hen crowing in the house, there was nothing to prevent her getting that much information any more than getting all the rest."

"If there was a hen crowing in the house!" said Dermot. "Surely, Father, if there had not been

she would not have said it."

"It is all the same whether or no," said the priest. "It is childish to take any notice of such a thing, but I should like to know whether anybody else heard this hen crowing."

"I did not hear her myself," said Dermot. "And there is no fear that Poll heard her, because she is as deaf as a bittle; and indeed I did not hear any-

body else say that she was heard."

"So I thought," said the priest. "I suppose that woman must have heard something of this rumour that is afloat concerning Sive; that she did not stop until she went down to the very city of Dublin. Then that she sent a hunt and a pursuit and a search after that thief, so that he was caught and hanged. And that the King gave Sive the three hundred pounds that had been taken from her and another three hundred along with it."

"Stop! stop! Father," said Dermot. "What is that you are saying, Father? How could that poor girl go to Dublin and find her way through the city? A little girl that was never more than twenty miles

from home!"

"I am only telling what the rumour is that I heard," said the priest. "I dare say that woman who pretends to tell fortunes, and can't, must have heard the same rumour, and that she thought if she had the first of the story for you she would get a 'hand-reach' of money out of you, which I dare say she did."

"She did not get much, Father," said Dermot.
"But what sort of rumour is it? or what set it

going?"

"Well, I was coming over myself to tell you what was going on, when I met the messenger who said

some of the neighbours were afraid you would get a

relapse."

"They needn't have done that!" said Dermot,
"I never saw them any other way than that. If
anyone were asking them to do it they would not
be so ready! Running to give a priest a journey
without any necessity! To think of it!"

"It does not matter a pin," said the priest. "I would have come in any case, to see whether you had any news from Sive, or whether there was any

foundation for this rumour that is afloat."

"I did not hear a single word of it until that woman came and said that Sive had met a bad companion, or something to that effect," said Dermot.

"Who was the bad companion she said Sive had

met?" said the priest.

"She did not tell us who he was. She did not give us any account of him, and that is what is

sending me out of my senses," said Dermot.

"At that rate," said the priest, "I dare say she heard the rest, too, just as I heard it. Some carmen brought it as a great wonder and as a topic of conversation between them, that Nosey Cormac was in Dublin also, and that he and Sive worked the business together to get the thief caught; that they both played their cards so well and so cleverly that the King's people were astonished, and so was the King, at their doing the work so well. Then, when Sive got six hundred pounds instead of the three hundred that had been taken from her, that a match was settled between her and Cormac, and that the pair are married by this time, or about to be married."

"Well, well!" said Dermot. "Think of that! Did anyone ever hear the like of it? I did not think she would have married him if he had had all the wealth in Ireland. It is a strange world! That is a most extraordinary business if it be true. But it is more likely that there is no foundation for it. There could not be, of course."

"I don't know in the world," said the priest. "I suppose time will tell, and that soon. Time always tells best. I would not be at all surprised myself if there turned out to be a spice of truth in the rumour."

"Why, Father, dear," said Dermot, "what is that you are saying? There are no two in the parish more unfit for each other than that pair. Sive might do very well if she were married to some even-tempered, firm, well-balanced man, such as Shiana there above. Perhaps Cormac might do well if he were married to some silent, patient woman, who would give him his own way in every possible manner. But that pair! If they are married it will be red war with them as long as they live."

"I don't know in the world, Dermot," said the priest. "To tell you the truth, I fancy that perhaps matters may get on with them better than that. Certainly Cormac is a rough-tempered, headstrong man. I don't say that she would give him much odds in those points. Still, notwithstanding all that, you see, perhaps if they were married it might happen that they would get on better with each other than either of them would get on with anybody else. I have seen the like of it before."

"You have seen a great deal, Father, without a doubt in the world, but you do not know Sive thoroughly. It is not I that should say it; but

there is no use in saying anything but what is right, and the truth is the best. I don't think there is a man living this day on the dry land of Ireland who could manage Sive."

"With the exception of one man I don't think there is," said the priest. "And there is another thing about it, there is not a woman living to-day on the dry land of Ireland (nor, I might say, in the next land to it) who could manage Cormac if Sive doesn't manage him; which she will. Cut off my ear if she doesn't."

"Why, Father," said Dermot, "anyone would imagine by the way you speak that you see some truth or foundation in this rumour."

"Well, the fact is, the carmen have the ins and outs of the story so exactly, and they all tell it so much in the same words, that it is hard to say that there is not some truth in it," said the priest.

"I never had the remotest idea that such a thing would happen," said Dermot. "I thought Sive would no more marry him than she would drown herself. And I thought he would not look at the side of the road that Sive was on, no, not if there wasn't another woman in Ireland. What I used to hear her saying was that there was not a man in Ireland she detested more than him, and that there was not an uglier man in Ireland than he. If the pair are married it beats all I ever saw."

"Perhaps," said the priest, "if she got all this consideration, as they say she did, from the King's people and from the King himself, on account of doing the work so well, and getting that thief arrested, and if she got six hundred pounds as a reward for it, Cormac may have said to himself that it would

be worth his while to look at the side of the road she would be on, and in fact that it would be better worth his while to look on that side than on the other. And perhaps when Sive would see Cormac in that frame of mind she might not be at all disinclined to say in her own mind that there are men to be found who are uglier than he."

"Ha! ha! ha!" said Dermot. "Well, what a joke, Father!" said he. "Who knows but that things may be better than we imagined them to be? 'The thing a man would regret more than his death, he does not know but it may be the very best thing for him."

With that, who should walk in at the door to them but the big tinker.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BIG TINKER'S TALE.

A long-limbed, broad-shouldered, sallow man was the big tinker. A lean, strong man. He was slightly pitted with small-pox, and he had very little beard. His eyes were slightly prominent and pursed underneath. He was long-nosed, long-cheeked, well shaped in the jaw and mouth. He was welcome in every company, for he was always making sport and fun and pastime for everybody.

In he walked to them, and no sooner did he see the priest than he drew back a little. He snatched the

caubeen¹ from his head and bared his yellow bald forehead; and a great shaggy head he had with very

black and curly hair.

"Come along, Patrick, my son," said the priest, smiling. "You need not fear," said he. "Perhaps you may be able to give us some account of this rumour that is abroad about Sive and Cormac the bailiff."

"Upon my word, Father," said the tinker, "that was exactly what brought me here now, and little notion I had that your reverence would be beforehand with me. There is no use in talking! It is my belief that a strange robin redbreast couldn't come into the

parish unknown to you."

"Sharp as we both are, Patrick," said the priest, "we need not be too boastful. Murring has been beforehand even with me, and she was near bringing a relapse upon this poor man with her incantations and fooling. She said there was a hen crowing in this house, and she said that Sive had met with some bad companion. And do you know what she said? She said she was from Ulster, and declared that she was sent all the way from the north in order to protect Sive against her enemies. I myself was coming over to see how this man was getting on, when I met a messenger coming to tell me the neighbours were afraid he was getting a relapse. I was wondering what could be the cause of the relapse until he told me that she had been talking to him. I dare say she did not give herself time to hear the story fully lest anyone else should be beforehand with her, and that the present she would get should be the smaller for it. I think she did get a 'handreach' from him, but she had not much to tell him, and what she had only seemed to disturb the poor man's mind the more, when it was disturbed enough already."

"And isn't it a great wonder that you did not

know her, Dermot?" said the tinker.

"I often heard of her, but I never saw her until then and it wasn't of her I was thinking, of course, but of my child," said Dermot.

"What sort of version did you hear of this rumour, Patrick?" said the priest. "Or is there

any foundation for it?"

"On my word, Father," said Patrick, "there could not be better foundation. It is not rumour nor hearsay, but clean truth. It was the carman, Ulick Burke, that told it to me; and it was Cormac himself that told it to him. He thinks Cormac and Sive are married by this time. Cormac says it was the King himself that made the match."

"Just hear him!" said Dermot.

"I tell you there is no word of a lie in it," said Patrick. "Since the day I was born I never heard of such an adventure. Cormac knew that Sive was gone from home. He followed her on horseback; he knew she was on foot, and although she had been some time on the road before he started, he thought there was no fear but that he would overtake her before she could reach the city. He was enquiring for her and giving descriptions of her along the road for a long time, and so he kept for a long time the road that she had taken, and he almost knew how far ahead of him she was. At last he was told that she had gone two roads. That put

him astray, and what he did then was to face straight for the city. He knew he would reach the city before her, and he did. He was known in the city. The King's people knew him well. He sent out police at once along the roads from the south and he gave them Sive's description. It was not long until they saw her coming, bent forward and running, with the hood of her cloak on her head. They made themselves known to her, but it was no use for them until they gave her 'the sure sign.' They told her it was Cormac the bailiff that had sent them to meet her, and 'by the same token' that Deaf Poll was the one person who saw her leaving home. That satisfied her.

"When Cormac asked her what had brought her, she told him she wanted to go to speak to the King and that she must get justice from him.

"'What has the King to do for you?' said

Cormac.

"'He has,' said she, 'to catch the thief who stole my money from me, and to take the money from him and give it back to me. What good is it for us to have a King, with his armed men round him, unless he is able to protect us from thieves?' said she. 'It is in the King's name my property was taken from me,' said she, 'and it shall not go unknown to him. I have only one life,' said she, 'but if I had twenty-one lives I would stake them all against that fellow sooner than I would let the scoundrelly act he did go scot free with him. The ground will swallow him or I'll come up with him, and when I do I promise you that I'll make him sore and sorry that he did not leave me alone. It was in the name of the King he took my

property. It is from the King I must get satisfaction, or he is no King. If I have been robbed in the King's name, isn't it the least the King can do to give me liberty and help and opportunity to follow and hunt up the thief until I catch him? I'll not leave a hole or a channel in Ireland that I won't search for him. Take me to the King,' said she. 'Take me to the King, or I'll go into his presence myself by some means.'

Cormac had to give her her own way. I don't think he had any objection. He was drawing water to his own mill in the matter; he knew that whoever would catch the thief and bring him to justice would be well paid for it. And he knew that no one could have better help in the work than Sive's help, so long as she was in that determined humour. He gave her her head.

"'I'll take you into the presence of the King,' said he, 'but take care not to do anything that would get me into a fix. You have often heard the proverb, "to go into the King's house is not the same as to get out," and "the flags of a great house are slippery." They are two good proverbs, and he who will not keep them well in mind will be sorry for it."

"'You need not fear,' said she. 'I only want to be placed standing in the presence of the King and be given leave to speak. All I have to say to him is that a gentleman came to my father's house in Munster; that he showed me the King's ring; that he pretended to be buying horses for the King; that he bought them in the King's name; that he pretended to me that he had not as much money as would pay for what he had bought, and that if I would lend him three hundred pounds for

a few days, in the King's name, I would be conferring a favour on the King, and that it would not go unreported to him; that I gave my three hundred to the gentleman in the King's name; and that that left myself and my father absolutely penniless, unless it is in the power of the King to remedy the mischief that was done in his name.'

"'All right,' said Cormac. 'Don't tell anyone living this plan that you have in mind. When you have done telling your story, tell the King that you would recognise this Sheeghy if you could see him, and that if it would be his majesty's pleasure to send a body of men with you, that you would go in search of him and bring him to justice.'

"'I'd know the scoundrel's head,' said she, 'if it was twenty-four hours boiling in a pot of porridge, and I'll knock the affectation out of him, I promise

you!'

"Cormac went and found a lodging for her; then he went and spoke to the man who was master of the King's household. He knew them all.

"'There is a young woman here from Munster,' said he, 'and she says that someone has stolen three hundred pounds from her, and that she cannot get at him; and that she has come to lodge a

complaint against him before the King.'

"'It is hard for the King to find them all,' said the master. 'There is a hunt all over Ireland,' said he, 'for the past three weeks and more, after some other thief, and I think it was in Munster he committed the crime, whatever it was, of which he has been guilty. We are tormented and worried and plagued by Munster people.'

"Cormac did not say a word.

"'When does she want to speak to the King?' said the master.

"'At whatever time the King himself may appoint,' said Cormac, and he slipped a gold-piece into the master's hand.

"'Stay a moment,' said the master, and he went off. He soon returned. 'Let her be here at noon to-morrow,' said he, 'and she will get justice. High and low get justice here. Let her be here at noon to-morrow, and leave the rest to me.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW SIVE WENT TO COURT.

"AT noon on the following day the two were at the door of the King's house. The master came out; he saw Cormac.

"' Where is she?' said he.

"'Here she is,' said Cormac, mildly.

"Come along, daughter,' said the master.

"She went with him. They went in at a door; they went on through a long corridor; they passed through another door and through another corridor; then they passed through a third door. It was not a corridor that was beyond that, but a fine, big broad sunny field, which was green and which had been closely mown with a scythe, and there were nice pathways across through it with gravel on them. There was a fine, noble palace at the far side of the field. The master went to the door of

the palace. Sive followed him. The master knocked softly at the door, and it was soon opened. The man who opened it was a fine, brave, portly gentleman. He had a silver cap on his head, or Sive thought it was silver, and he wore a silken cloak. He had a battle-axe on his shoulder, and it was polished and shining like glass, and it was so sharp that you would think it would take the head off a horse at one blow. The two men spoke in whispers for a little time. Then the man with the axe beckoned to Sive, and she followed him, and the other man remained outside.

"No sooner was Sive inside the door than her eyes nearly jumped out with astonishment. She saw a splendid hall, large, wide, and high, and nobles sitting at each side of it. Fine, tall, handsome men they were, with silk cloaks, and chains of gold, and gold buckles on their shoes, and each man with his sword at his side. Up in front of her she saw one man who was taller and stronger and handsomer than any other man there. There was a crown of gold on his head, and things like little horns standing up out of it all round. On the top of each little horn there was a little ball of gold, and in the middle of each little ball there was some sort of light, shining and twinkling like a star on a frosty night. He wore a red cloak, as red as the cloak Sive herself wore on the fair day, or perhaps redder. He had a sceptre in his right hand, and he was seated on a big, high chair, and you would think every bit of it was made of twisted gold. When Sive saw him she knew he was the King, but she was not a bit nervous or afraid of him, because he had not a hard, haughty look,

but a beautiful, mild, gentle, friendly look. The royal chair itself was on a raised platform, which was about half-a-foot higher than the rest of the floor. There were two other chairs there, one of them on each side of the dais, down on the floor, and there were two noblemen seated on them. They were old, grey men. The one who was on the right of the King had long, grey hair, which hung backward and downward upon his shoulders, and he had a long grey beard down the front of his neck and on his bosom; he was wearing a green cloak, and there was a large harp standing near him. The man who was on the other side of the King had long grey hair also, and there was a band of gold round his head keeping the hair back from his forehead, and he wore a long, grey beard exactly like the one on the man with the harp. But he was a bigger and heavier man by far than the man with the harp.

"Sive was noticing all those things while she was walking up the floor towards the King. When she was as near as five yards or so to him, she stopped.

"'Move up a little further, daughter,' said the King. She did not stir.

"' Move up, don't be shy,' said the King.

"'Move up, there is nothing to happen you,' said the man with the axe, whispering to her.

"She did nothing at all but to let her cloak fall back down on the floor, and to make one spring at the beard of the big man who was on the King's left, and to begin to tug at the beard, just as she did to the man of the colt the night of the fair. The second pull she made at the beard, it came away in her hands in one piece, beard, hair, gold band

and all, and who should she have there alive in the

flesh but honest Sheeghy!

"'Aha! you thief of the black gallows!' said she, hand me out here at once my money that you tricked out of me in the name of the King.'

"In an instant there were twenty hands raised over them, and a drawn sword in every one of the

hands.

"'Do not strike him,' said the King. 'Arrest him.—Where are you from, daughter?' said the king.

"She flung herself on her knees before the King.

"'From Munster, my King,' said she, 'and that man came the other day to my father's house and he said he was buying horses for you, my King, and he bought all the horses that were in the fair that day, and he paid false money for them, and he showed me your ring, my King, and he said he had not money enough to pay for all he had bought, and he asked me to give him three hundred pounds in your name, my King, and I gave it to him. I had hardly given it to him when Shiana found out that he was a thief, and he sent Cormac after him. But Cormac failed to overtake him. And indeed it was no wonder he failed seeing that the fellow was sitting snug in here with long grey hair on him and a long, grey beard.—Look at that!'

"'Gently, daughter,' said the King. 'Who is

Cormac?'

"'The bailiff we have, my King,' said she.

"' Where is he now?' said the King.

"'He is outside at the gate, my King,' said she.

"'Bring him in,' said the King.

"He was brought in, and indeed, Father, Ulick

Burke says that if you had only one laugh in you, you would give it out if you were to see the two eyes Cormac showed, and the wonder and amazement that came upon him, when he saw Sive on her knees before the King, and that mass of hair and beard in her hands, and her cloak behind her on the ground, and the man who went walking the fair with her, standing there above, a prisoner, and the man with the battle-axe standing behind him ready to split his head with the axe if he stirred.

"'Bailiff," said the King, 'who is that man?'

"'That, my King,' said Cormac, 'is the man who bought the horses at the Well Fair in Munster, and who paid the false money for them. There were four of them, and three of them were caught, but we failed to come up with this one. And I don't think there is a corner in this city, nor perhaps in all Ireland, in which there are not people this moment searching for him. Word must be sent out at once to tell them that he has been caught, and not to have poor men killing themselves any longer running after him where he is not to be found."

"'One moment, bailiff,' said the King. 'I think

you are under a slight mistake.'

"'Oh, no, my King,' said Cormac.

"'Yes,' said the King, 'I believe you are, because it is not on you the duty lies of keeping the sky

and the ground asunder.'

"All the nobles laughed. Cormac looked round at them and his mouth opened, and his eyes grew round and sharp. He did not know what had made them laugh.

"Then the King called Sive to him, and he

questioned her, and gathered from her the whole truth of the matter, from beginning to end, all the particulars of the match and promise of marriage and loan of money and all, while Sheeghy stood there bound, listening to them, and the man with the axe behind him.

"When Sive had finished her story she drew from her pocket some of the false money and gave it to the King. He looked at it closely. Then he called the head of the city police, who was standing below at the door. He came up.

"'How did it happen,' said the King, 'that three of them were caught and that the fourth escaped?'

"'That is what was puzzling me, my King,' said he, 'but I understand it now. There,' said he, pointing his finger towards Sheeghy, 'There is the man who swore information against the other three.'

"A groan escaped from all present when they heard that. 'He also swore,' said the head of the police, 'that the person who was manufacturing the false coin was a man who lives in Munster, and whose name is Shiana, and that it was he that bought the horses at the fair in your name, my King, and as a confirmation of that, that the man was in abject poverty until a very little time ago. That he was but a poor shoemaker in a cabin at the foot of a mountain, and that he is now the richest and most independent man in Ireland. I at once ordered a body of men to go south straight into Munster and to arrest that Shiana, when who should walk in at the door to us but Cormac, the bailiff here, in pursuit of the thieves, and covered with sweat and road-dust. He told us a story then which was exactly the opposite of the other story.

He told us that he himself knew Shiana thoroughly, and that he was an honest man, and that it was he that put Cormac himself on the track of the thieves, and that but for him they would not have been caught at all. I determined to bring the man who had told the first story face to face with Cormac, but there was neither tale nor tidings of him. He was gone as if the ground had swallowed him. I sent people to search for him into every part of the city. I joined in the search, but it was no use for us. He was not to be found high or low. I remember, though, right well,' said he, 'that I saw passing me in the street, and walking leisurely, one of the King's nobles, with a long, grey beard, fine and soft and skeiny, just like this,' said he, taking the mass of hair from Sive's hand, 'and fine heavy hair like this falling backward and downward upon his shoulders in rings, waving and curling. Little notion I had then that the man I wanted was so near me.'

"But to give you the end of the story, Father, the gentleman's house was searched, and heaps of silver and of gold, and of other valuables were found there. And the King said that Sive should be given double the amount that she had lost, and also her choice of all the valuable and exquisite things that were there. And as for the horses that were bought at the fair, and for which the false money was paid, the King said they must be searched for and sent back to Munster to their owners. Then the King ordered Sheeghy's house to be cleaned and settled and put in order and given to Sive, if she wished to go to live in it, and to take her father with her there, because she had conferred a great favour

upon him, a greater favour than any of the nobles who were around him had ever conferred upon him, much as he had confided in them, and close as was their kinship with him. It was on the day after that that Ulick Burke heard of the match. What people were saying was that Sive and Cormac were to be married, and that they would go to live in the big house, and that there never was anything like the amount of wealth that Sive had got, beside the six hundred pounds."

"Well, well, well!" said Dermot. "It is a wonderful world! Who would have thought that that pair would ever be seen in a marriage bond?"

"Will you go to live in Dublin, Dermot?" said

Patrick.

"Wherever he goes," said the priest, "I don't think he will get a relapse this time."

"When will you be going down to the city your-self, Father?" said Patrick.

"Why should I, Patrick?" said the priest.

"Why should you, Father, but to marry those two! If I were in your position, Father, I would not give leave to the city people to perform this marriage, whatever you might do about Sheeghy's marriage."

"I never believed in Sheeghy's marriage," said the priest, "nor did I wish to have anything to do with

it."

"Ulick says," said Patrick, "that the King said that he must get sight of Shiana; that it was a pity that a man of such keen intelligence should not be in some position or in some business where he or somebody else would have the benefit of his intelligence. He thinks that if he had had a man like

Shiana at the head of his soldiers, honest Sheeghy

would not have escaped so long."

"Isn't it a great wonder," said the priest, "that Ulick Burke, or someone, did not tell the King that we have a man here whose intelligence is far keener than even Shiana's, and whom a warm nest near the King would suit as well as it would suit anyone! Especially as he has not already twice as much money as he needs, as Shiana has."

"The place would not agree with my health, Father," said Patrick. "There is many a man who is in a great hurry to get into a snug berth near the King, and whose life is not the longer for it when he gets his wish! 'The flags of a great house are slippery.' Whoever Sheeghy is, I think he understands by this time 'that it is not the same thing to go to the King's house and to come out of it.' I wish the King well—at a distance from me. May God and Mary prosper him!"

"On my word, Patrick," said Dermot, "I think

you are right."

"And the world knows, Dermot," said Patrick, "that you will go down to the city to live with Sive and Cormac in the big house, as soon as the place is

ready for you!"

"On my word, Patrick, I don't think I will. I think that what I shall do is just to stay in this old nest, as I am. However big and fine Sheeghy's house may be, I don't think I will go encroaching upon them in it. May be, like the King's house, it might be easier to go into it than to come out of it. May be it might be easier to stay out of it than to do either. I will stay where I am, here among the neighbours, in the place where my father spent his

life, and my grandfather, and I don't know how many fathers before them."

"I am inclined to think that you have decided

wisely, Dermot," said the priest.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RETURN OF SIVE AND CORMAC.

A week later there was great noise in the little town. The King's soldiers came, with the Captain at their head, all on horseback, each man wearing a silken cloak, each man's sword hanging down by the flank of his horse, and a fine long spear standing up high in his hand, while the men and women and children of the town crowded and crushed each other, striving to get a view of them.

Sive was with them, and Cormac, driven in a fine coach, with a pair of the King's horses drawing the coach. Sive wore a red cloak, redder far, and finer, than the cloak she had on, that day of the fair. I suppose she had packed up the black cloak that she was wearing the morning that Poll saw her going away. She had a golden chain on her neck, and it was as thick and as heavy, you would think, as the ridge-band of a cart. There were big gold rings on her fingers and buckles of gold on her shoes. It was not a hood that was on the cloak, but a cape; and all round the edge of the cape, and falling down her shoulders, there was a fringe of golden drops, each drop an inch and a half

long, and the drops were all shivering and shining and sparkling in the sun with every movement of the coach. In the breast of the cloak, on her bosom, there was a golden button as big as a crown-piece. Down in front, along the edge of the cloak and all round the lower hem of it, there was a border of cloth-of-gold which was fully two inches in breadth, so splendid and bright that you would think it was a streak of flame, as it swayed about in the sunlight. She had the golden band that was on Sheeghy's head when he had his grey wig, wearing it on her own head to hold back her hair.

Cormac was there sitting beside her in the coach. He wore no ornaments, though, but was the same as he always was. He was the same bailiff. He had the same bullying mouth, and the cheeks, and the thick neck, and the grunting, just as he had that day he came to demand possession from the widow. If there was any change in him it was in the grunting. He was doing that more heavily than usual.

The coach stopped outside Grey Dermot's house. Dermot was standing between the two jambs of the door, with his shoulder to the doorpost. Sive jumped out of the coach, and ran over to him.

"Oh!" said she, "why, what has happened to you since?" putting her two arms round his neck and giving him a couple of kisses. "Why, dad," said she, "there is not a bit of flesh on you! What in the world has happened to you?"

"A little bit of a chill came upon me, my dear, and I think it stuck to me more than I would have expected."

"A little bit of a chill!" said she. "You have had some bad illness; if you hadn't, you wouldn't look as

you do. See, your clothes are in bags about you. What has happened to him, Poll?"

"He has just got over a fever,—health and life

where it is told!" said Poll.

"A fever!" said Sive. "Save us! Why, what sort of man are you, or what mischief was upon you, that you went and put that sickness on yourself without need or necessity? It is a strange thing that one couldn't go from home for a little while and leave you in charge of the place without your going and putting a fever upon yourself with your fretting and foolishness. Just see what you look like now!"—And with that she began to cry.

Cormac walked in after her.

"By the deer, Dermot," said he, "but you have come out of it well. You have come out of it exceedingly well, I can tell you. I had no fears about you, nor any serious doubt of your recovery, but all the same I did not think you would come out of it so well. It must be that your heart is very sound and strong, for you to be so sturdy after all you have put over

you."

"You don't know the half of it, Cormac," said Dermot. "A woman walked in here to me some days ago, and you never saw such a start as she gave me. I never got such a start since the day I was born, even counting the night of the fair. She almost said to me, up to my face, that Sive had been killed on the road somewhere to the north, and that she had seen her dead. But that the priest came in, and that he persuaded me that there was no meaning in her talk, I think my heart would have been injured by it."

[&]quot;But who was she, though?" said Cormac.

"Indeed, I don't know who she was. I had never set eyes on her before that, and I tell you I have no desire to see her again," said Dermot. "She was the most extraordinary woman I ever came across."

"What sort of woman was she?" said Cormac.

"A bad sort, I promise you," said Dermot. "She was a great stump of a hard, rough, bony woman, and she was blind of one eye, and one side of her mouth was twisted back almost to her ear, save the mark ever!"

"Oh, I have her!" said Cormac. "A bad sort! you may well say it. I know that bold lass a long time. It was I that put her eye out and disfigured her face like that."

" You!" said Dermot.

"Yes, I. And I will tell you how it was," said "I think it was ten years ago. I was coming home from Cork. It was in the dead of night. I was coming this way toward Dripsey Bridge. knew the place had the name of being haunted, but I had no nervousness or fear about it. I never have any fear of anything of that sort, whatever time of night it may be, when I am doing my own business. They cannot touch a person who is doing his own business and not interfering with them, directly or indirectly. But if a person will be going into haunted places at unseasonable times and through sheer foolhardiness, it is no wonder that he should get something else to mind sometimes. But anyhow, by a side-look that I gave, what should I see but a woman sitting on the other shaft of the cart from me, with her back to me. When I saw her I suppose I must have got a touch of faintness on account of the place being said to be haunted; but whatever it was that came over me it didn't last long. Soon I felt something like a human hand going into my bosom, where I carried whatever little money I had. No sooner did I feel the hand than I knew at once that it was a living person I had to deal with, and I laid hold upon the hand. It was a vigorous, strong hand, with a well-developed, well-shaped, stout forearm to it. An attempt was made to pull it away from me, but I tell you I kept my grip, and the more I succeeded in keeping my grip, the more my courage and strength returned to me. When the woman saw that it was useless for her to go on pulling, she remained still, but she did not turn her face to me. While she was keeping still and I was trying to make out who she was, my grip slackened unknown to me. The hand was snatched from me, and the woman jumped out of the cart at the far side from me. Just as she jumped out,—as if a hook or something had got caught in her clothing,-she was thrown down. She fell on the road, and the wheel went over her head. moment when she alighted on the road her feet went from under her, and her head turned in under the wheel. I was near fainting in good earnest then. 'Her head is cut in two!' said I to myself. I stopped the horse at once. I was sure the woman was dead. and that I had no witness but God as to how the thing had happened. I jumped out of the cart. While I was coming round from my own side of the horse, the woman jumped up and over the fence she went into a grove that was near the road. 'Well!' said I in my own mind, 'I give thanks to God of glory (praise be to Him for ever) whatever sort you are, that you are able to do that !' I drove on here to the Bridge and I stopped at the stage house. As soon as

I saw the first glimmering of the light of day, out with me and eastward again to the place where I saw her going in over the fence. There was a pool of blood on the road at the place where she was knocked down. and there was a great deal of blood on the ground over as far as the fence, and on the top of the fence where she had jumped over. I went over and followed the trail of blood through the grove to the north-east, and on again through the field which was beyond the grove, until I came to a little house, a miserable little cabin, in the north-eastern corner of the field. The trail of the blood was there on the ground, up to the door of the little house. I put my hand on the latch. The door moved in before me. I went in. I saw a woman sitting on a stool in front of the fire, swaying herself to and fro like a woman in grief, and crying under her breath.

"'God save all here!' said I. She sprang up and turned her face to me. She had her head wrapped in a cloth, except one of her eyes, and that eye was almost closed with swelling. She flung herself on her knees. 'I appeal to you for my life, Cormac!' said she. 'Don't give me up to the law this time! I have had my mother there below,' said she, 'without mind or sense, unable to walk or move or know anybody, or speak, for two years and five weeks next Saturday. If I am taken from her now she will die of starvation! She will have nobody to bring priest or friar to her, or to hand a drink to her! I implore you, for the love of Our Lord in Heaven and for the love of the Virgin Mary, and for the sake of the soul of your own mother, not to take me away from that wretched being below there!'

"It was no misnomer to call the old woman a

wretched being, and it was quite true to say that the young woman was also a wretched being, seeing the state she was in after the accident that had befallen her. I turned my face to the door, and I said: 'I was coming home from Cork last night, and some woman got into the cart beside me, pretending that she was a spirit, God preserve us! She put her hand into my bosom. She meant to take my money from me, but she did not succeed. I don't know what business a spirit would have with gold or silver. I gripped hold of the hand. She was a queer spirit, with a hand of flesh and blood! I meant to keep hold of her and to take her with me to see if I could find out what sort of spirit she was, but she was too quick for me. She snatched her hand from me and jumped out of the cart. The wheel went over her head. I could not help that. It was the providence of God (praise to Him for ever!) that she was not killed on the spot. But I think that accident has given her punishment enough for this time. I do not know who she is, or to what family she belongs,' said I, 'but if I ever hear of her playing that trick again, or if I set eyes upon her, at home or abroad, I will give her up to the law -and I rushed out at the door. I suppose there were never so many holy blessings sent after any Christian as were sent after me as I went down the field that summer morning as the sun was rising. But it was not this I came here to speak about, but quite another matter. I have something else to put before you now, Dermot. Myself and Sive here are thinking that we could not do better than spend the rest of our life together. Do you think you would find any fault with me as a son-in-law. Dermot?"

"Why, indeed, Cormac, my son," said Dermot,

"I don't think there is a man to be found in Ireland who would be a better head to her than you will be. And the priest himself said, the day we heard the first rumour of this, that it was a good match, a very good match, and that there was no doubt but that there would be luck upon it, with the help of God, and we all well."

"Very good," said Cormac. "I will leave you there for a while, and I'll go east to the priest's house to see when it would be convenient for him to come and marry us."

CHAPTER XXV.

SHIANA'S PROMISE TO THE KING.

By that time the King's men had dismounted on the fair-green. Beside the horses which they had for their own riding, they had another large herd of driven horses, in charge of grooms. These were the horses that were to be given back to the people from whom they had been bought on that fair-day, and to whom the false money had been paid for them in the King's name. The town's-people were gathered on the fence all round the field, staring with all their eyes at the King's men, and at their silken cloaks and their caps, and at the big long swords they had, and the small swords, and at the fine long smooth lances held erect, and at the ribbons that hung out at the tops of them, fluttering in the wind. But the King's men did not pretend that any of these things was a wonder to them.

They made no wonder of themselves, nor of anybody else.

The country people were coming, one by one, because word had been sent to them all round, that anyone from whom a horse had been bought for the King, and to whom false money had been given in payment for it, had only to come to the fair-green that day and he could get his horse if he recognized him, provided some responsible person would go security for him.

They all came. There was no danger of anyone coming and pretending that he had lost a horse. They all knew each other too well. That trick would be discovered at once: and besides, nobody of that sort could get a man to go security for him. owner of the colt came, and John Kittach came to go security for him. He was almost the first man who got his own. Before his own horse was given to any man, a certain arrangement was made. It was ordered that none of those who had got their horses should leave the field until the last horse was given out, and the last man satisfied. The reason why this order was given was lest any mistake should be made in the distribution of the horses, and that, in order to remedy the mistake, it might be necessary that all the horses and all the claimants should be on the spot.

The claimants had plenty of responsible people to act as securities. The priest was there, and he was going security for seven men together. Cormac was there, because he found the priest had left the house before he reached it, and he followed him. Dermot was there, because Sive would not be satisfied unless he came out to see the King's men and all the splendour of their accoutrements and their imposing

appearance. Shiana was there, because every one of the claimants was asking him to go security for him, whether he had given security for anyone else or not.

The claimants and the securities were called up before the military Captain. The owner of the colt was first. He saw the colt long before he was called, and he knew him well. Another man saw the colt too, and thought it was his own. When the claimant of the colt was called for, they both started up.

"He is mine," said one of them.

"He is not yours; he is mine," said the other.

The Captain looked at the securities. Nobody knew

what ought to be done. Shiana spoke.

"Let the colt be taken out into the middle of the field," said he. "Let one of these two claimants go to one side of the field and the other to the other side. Then let the colt be turned loose, and let them both call him. I think the colt will come to the lawful claimant."

It was done. As soon as the colt got his head he ran to the man who had fed him.

Soon the horses were distributed, but even then there were still people who had not got their own horses. The searchers had not been able to find all the horses. The people who were at the loss of their property were sad and sorrowful, and everybody said it would be a hard case if they were left in the lurch the second day just as they had been the first day. Everyone was pitying them, and everyone was weighing the pros and cons as to how they ought to bring their case again before the King. Everybody felt sure that if the King knew the true state of the case he would do something for them.

Then it was that the Captain said that he himself

had orders from the King that if any man's horse should not be there, the value of the horse was to be given to him. "But," said he, "how can we find out the value of the horse, when the horse is not there?"

Everyone paused. No one knew how the value of the horse could be made out when the horse was not there. There would be no sense in taking the judgment of the claimant as to the value of his own horse. Neither would there be any sense in giving good money, to the amount of the false money, to every claimant whose horse was not there to give him. What was to be done? The thing was becoming a puzzle to them all; the claimants demanding their own boldly, according as the King had ordered it to be given to them; the Captain in a fix, not knowing how much ought to be given to each claimant; and no one able to form any idea of the just value of the horses that had not been found.

Shiana spoke again.

"Let it be settled in this way," said he. "Let there be brought out here before us the best horse and the worst horse of those horses that have now been distributed. Let two judges estimate what each of these two horses is worth. Then let the large value and the small value be put together, and let the total be halved. By that settlement perhaps there will be one man who will get a little more than his right, and another who will get a little less than his right, but I don't think it is possible to make any other settlement that would come nearer to the right."

All the people shouted and clapped their hands.

"That's the talk! That's the talk!" said they.

"That is a just decision!"

The Captain looked at Shiana.

"Why," said he, "it is not a shoemaker we have in you, but a judge!"

The matter was settled in that way, and everyone was satisfied.

Great as was the people's eagerness to get a sight of the King's men and of their weapons and uniforms, and of their martial order and pomp, still greater was the eagerness of the King's men to get a sight of Shiana, because while Cormac was in the city his mouth had never stopped talking of Shiana and making a wonder of him, and boasting that there was not another man like him in Ireland for depth of mind and sharpness of intellect, and for long-headedness, and for quickness of action when action was necessary.

At the first look they got at him, when he came into the field with the people who had brought him with them to give the security, they felt a kind of disappointment. "Ach!" said they, "if that is he!" He seemed to them to be nothing but a shoemaker, like any other shoemaker, and Cormac's talk to be nothing but boastful nonsense. But when they heard the settlement he made about the horses, they opened their eyes, and were immensely surprised to think that none of themselves had hit upon that way of arranging matters.

When it was all settled and every one was satisfied, and the King's people were thinking of returning home, the Captain came to Shiana and called him aside.

"I want to speak to you, Shiana," said he. "When I was leaving home the King commanded me to bring you down with me when I returned, because he had heard a great account of you, and he would wish to

have a man of your character about him down there."

"Say to the King, sir," said Shiana, "that I regard worldly riches as nothing and I care not whether I live or die, in comparison with carrying out the will of my King; that my good qualities are nothing to speak of, and my knowledge is small, but that however little or great my best may be, I will do it in his service. Ask his Majesty to give me a little time to arrange such business matters as I have in hand here, and to wind up my affairs."

"How much time would you need," said the

Captain.

"A year and a quarter, sir," said Shiana.

"Very good," said the Captain.

The reason why Shiana said "a year and a quarter," was because, at that time, all that was left unspent of the thirteen years was only a year and a quarter.

Sheila.—Ach, the poor fellow! What good was his life to him! And just think how quickly the time

had gone!

ABBIE.—Yes, though one would think, at the beginning of the time, that there was no knowing when it would be spent.

Nora.—And her mother said that Peg wouldn't be thirteen years old until May.

KATE.—When did she say that?

Nora.—Don't you remember that night that Sheila got into such a fright, and that we all ran away?

I had not gone quite out, and I heard that.

"And you only thirteen years in May next," said she.

Peg.—However long or short the years were, they

were gone, all but a year and a quarter, and even

that was going fast.

KATE.—I don't know how in the world he was able to sleep at night or to eat any food. I think if I were in his case it would kill me to be thinking of the day that was coming. I don't know in all the world how he was able to take it so quietly.

Peg.—There was hardly a week that he used not to walk over to the priest's house, and any day that he went over, he and the priest used to spend a good

while together.

ABBIE.—Surely he did not tell his secret to the priest?

PEG.—He had not told the secret the day he was talking to him about that match with Short Mary, and he did not tell it to him that day, but I don't know whether he told it to him afterwards or not.

Nora.-Why, he couldn't tell it to him.

KATE.—Listen to her! Surely nobody is bound to keep a secret from a priest.

PEG.—A person is not bound to keep a secret from a priest when he is making a confession to a priest, but he might be bound not to tell him the secret outside the confession.

NORA.—Oh, I understand. And when the priest had heard the secret in confession, the priest himself would be bound to keep the secret and not to let it out.

PEG.—He would, exactly; just as the priest is bound to keep the secret of the sins a person tells him.

But anyhow, Shiana used often to be over, talking with the priest, and they used to spend a good part of the day together. Shiana was often seen going to Communion, and the people used to be glad of that,

especially as he had always had the reputation of being rather wanting in faith. First he used to be seen going to Communion twice in the year, at Easter and at Christmas; then once a quarter; and in the end he was seen going to Communion every first Sunday of the month.

He and the priest were on the fair-green talking together after the horses had been distributed. The military Captain came to them to say good-bye to the priest, and who should come up to them at the

very same time, but Cormac.

"Well, Father," said Cormac, "now that all that business is done and everybody is satisfied, perhaps it would be no harm for us to see about doing another little bit of business. Don't go, Shiana," said he, "nor you, sir," to the Captain. "You both did that other business so well that I don't object to your being present at my own business now."

"But for Shiana we should have been in a bad way about the business a while ago," said the Captain. "All I have to do now is to bid farewell to your priest and to you all before I turn my face toward the 'City-far-away.' But whatever this other business is that you have to do, Cormac, if you would like me to make a little delay on account of it, I will make it, and welcome. I hope, Father," said he to the priest, "that you are satisfied with the day's work?"

"Very well satisfied, sir," said the priest. "Give my goodwill and regard most truly and heartily to his Majesty when you have speech with him, and say that I cannot tell his Majesty how grateful I am, and we all are, to him for what he has done for these poor people who had lost their property. Say to his Majesty that the people of this place will long remem-



ber that noble action, and that if an emergency ever arises in which help would be wanted from us—God forbid that it should come, but if it should—tell him that there is not a man in this district who will not cheerfully risk his life for his King."

"This gentleman knows, Father," said Cormac, "that I have often said that very thing to him since the day the King gave orders to have those horses searched for and given back to the poor people."

"Indeed you did, Cormac," said the Captain.
"You said it so often that there is no fear of anybody forgetting it. But it won't do for us to forget your own business. What business is this that you have to do yourself, Cormac? I hope it won't put us in as tight a fix as we were in a while ago, until Shiana got us out of it."

"That is the thing, Cormac." said the priest. "What business is this that you have to do?"

"I was over at your house, Father, to speak to you about it, but you were gone before I got there. I was told that you had come here, and I followed your reverence."

"Very good," said the priest. "We are all here now. What do you want, Cormac?"

"This, Father," said Cormac; "I want to make a little alteration in my way of life."

"An alteration in your way of life?" said the priest, as if he were greatly astonished. "Surely, Cormac, you are not going to give up the office of bailiff?"

"Oh, indeed now, Father," said Cormac, "I am sure you know very well that I am not going to give up the office of bailiff, of course; but your reverence is always ready for a joke, and you are determined

now to have a little bit of fun at me, since I seldom

give your reverence the opportunity for it."

"Well, really and truly, Cormac," said the priest, laughing, "it is not altogether a subject for fun or joking. 'A little alteration' you call it. In my opinion it is a very big alteration. But be it little or big, one thing is certain: if it was as a help and assistance to her husband that the wife was intended, I do not think there will be a man to be found whose wife will be a greater help and assistance to him than Sive will be to you when you have married her."

"Oh, give me your holy hand, Father!" said Cormac. "In fun or in earnest you say well, and a good hand you are at telling the truth. And when will it be convenient for your reverence to come and

tie the knot for us?"

"Whatever time will fit in best with your own convenience, Cormac," said the priest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WEDDING.

The time was fixed. Before the King's men were gone out of the place they were told that the day was fixed, and what day it was. When they went home they told it to the King. The King sent off a messenger at once with a present of wine for the wedding, and with a ring for Sive. The messenger made good haste. He arrived just on the morning of the day of the marriage, after spending the week on the road,

both day and night almost. He had a horse and cart, and there was enough of a load for the horse. There was a basket in the cart, a fine big basket made of white peeled rods, and it was full to the top of bottles of wine. There were, I think, a hundred dozen bottles of wine in it. If it was not more than that, it was not less. And there was plenty of straw packed round the bottles lest they should be broken. Not one of the bottles got broken, and the messenger did not open a single one of them. He didn't, really. He didn't need to. He had full and plenty of food and drink without them. Beside the basket and the bottles there was a large barrel of wine in the cart. There were not less than six score gallons of wine in that barrel. I promise you there was enough of a load for the horse.

The messenger had a gold ring for Sive, a ring which the King himself gave him to take to her, her wedding ring. There was a precious stone in that ring, as big as a hare's eye, you would think, and that stone would make light for you in the dark, as phosphorus would. When Sive saw that ring and the stone in it, she was almost out of her mind with joy and delight and pride.

"Oh! Dad," said she, "look at that!"

"I see it, my dear," said Dermot. "If I were you," said he, "I would not show that ring to everybody. There are people in the world, Sive, my daughter, who would not value a human life at a pin's worth compared with getting hold of a thing of that sort. I would put it under lock and key if I were in your place."

"I think I will take your advice, Dad," said she.
"I have enough of other rings." And she took his advice. She put it back again into the little box in

which it came, and she shut the box again firmly and

locked it up. She had plenty of other rings.

The evening was coming, and the people who had been asked to the wedding were coming also. John Kittach and his daughter came. The Maid of the Liss and her people came. Nora of the Causeway and her two brothers came, the two best dancers in the country. Nora herself was the best girl dancer in the country. The man of the colt came, and when someone asked him "where was the rest of his beard?"—
"She pulled a beard that was better than my beard," said he; "and it is well for you and me that she did. If she hadn't done it, things would be in a bad way with us. I should be without my colt, and you would be without your money. You got more money by the beard Sive pulled than you would get for your horse if you had him now."

"Ach, I did not," said the other man. "There was no better horse than he at the fair that day."

"I would say you were right in that, if I were to hear the buyers saying it. But anyhow, his goodness would be little good to you, but for the act Sive did."

"You may say so!" said the other man.

The big tinker came to the wedding, and he was very sunny and smiling and gracious and bright-eyed, ready and quick-witted and well-spoken. The company was in no danger of finding the conversation lag into silence or dulness while he was present. He was never without something to say that would stir people up, and make them laugh, and set them talking, without their dreaming that it was anyone but themselves that had started the conversation. But when he had had one or two good drinks of the King's Spanish wine there were no bounds to him.

One thing that was better than all his other good qualities was that it was impossible to make him angry; and if he saw two people on the point of falling out with each other, before he would have said two words between them the anger would be all gone, and they would be laughing.

Shiana was there, silent, and breathing slowly as usual, with his mouth closed and his eyes wide open, looking far away, so that you would think he could see into the other world. He spent most of the night sitting above near the priest and John Kittach. He did not speak much of his own accord, but when he was spoken to there was no fear but he would hold his own with anyone.

And if you will believe me, Michael was there, and Michael's mother.

KATE.—No! And after his calling Sive a jade!

ABBIE.—You are wrong, Kate. He didn't call her a jade. But he was sorry that he hadn't called her so.

KATE.—He called her a worse name than that. He called her a "brazen thing," and said she was old—and he was near paying for it.

PEG.—When Sive came home from the city the first thing Poll told her was that Michael's mother had been coming, and that she often spent the night in the house taking care of the sick man, while the nurse took a sleep. Bad as Sive was, that touched her heart. Before anyone had been invited she walked west to the widow's house and told her that she must come. "And," said she, "if you and Michael won't come to us, we won't have any wedding feast at all. I shall make out that my father is too weak as yet. I feel sure that but for you and John Kittach's

daughter, he would be under the clay to-day. I have never put any trust in nurses. Many a time a bad nurse has let a sick person fall into a relapse, on purpose to keep good board and lodging for herself a little while longer. Will you come?" said she.

"Indeed I will, to be sure," said the other woman.

"Why should I not?"

"Will Michael come?" said Sive.

"He will, never fear," said the widow.

So they came.

Dermot was full of wonder and amazement when he saw Michael making himself useful, and Sive ordering him about and calling him by his name, saying "Michael, do this; Michael, do that. Come here, Michael, and lift this with me," here, there, and everywhere.

"Praise be for ever to God!" said Dermot in his own mind. "There is no knowing what will happen

to us next!"

There was a great gathering at the wedding, but even so, there was more than full and plenty of food and drink provided. Sive and her father did the thing without any stinginess, but hospitably and generously, and nobody present was neglected in any way, you may be sure. When the table was laid you would be delighted to look at it. It was a big, long, broad table, but it was not really one table, but two, placed end to end. At the head of the table, in front of the priest, there was a piece of beef as big and as broad as a half-barrel. As for the dish that was under that piece of meat, there was nothing causing greater wonder to the big tinker than how it could hold such a load without breaking. At the other end of the table, before the curate, there was a quarter of mutton,

bigger than many a quarter of beef might be. On each side of the table, up and down, there was every sort of dish crowded one against another, with every sort of meat upon them, bacon, and lamb, and veal, and ducks, and geese, and kids, and hares, and grouse, and snipe, and chickens.

Forty-four people sat down to table together in the first set. Michael counted them. And yet the company had to take turns, there were so many people at the wedding feast. According as one got up another sat down in the place he had left. But there was no fear that the last person would be badly off; when all were satisfied there was enough left for as many more.

Great as were the numbers at that wedding feast that night, both men and women, and young and old, they all had one thought in their mind. That thought was in their mind, clear and distinct. Good as was the food and the drink, and great as was the wit and the fun that there was over the food and drink, and great as was the entertainment and noise that was going on, they all had that thought in secret, although not one of them said one tittle about it to any of the others. The thought was: how little notion any one of those present had had, after all the matches that were in the making during the time that had gone before, and after all the reports that had been going round, about Shiana, and Short Mary, and Nora of the Causeway, and the Maid of the Liss, that it would be Nosey Cormac they would be marrying in the end! Their minds were full of it, full of it, full of it. But I promise you there was no fear that any of them let out a single hint of it.

It was of that Michael was thinking when some-

one asked him for a knife, and he brought him a plate of bacon. It was of that the Maid of the Liss was thinking when she said she "had quite finished," while she held out her plate for more meat. It was of that Nora of the Causeway was thinking, when someone asked her if he should pour her out a glass of wine, and she said "How should I know?" so that everybody burst out laughing. Probably it was also of that that even Short Mary was thinking, when she asked the owner of the colt "how much he got for his horse on the fair-day."

There was one person in the company, however, to whom that thought never occurred in any way, good, bad, or indifferent, during the night. That person was Cormac himself. He had no idea that such a thought was in the mind of anyone present.

Beggars and cripples and tramps from every side of the country were collected out on the road and all round the house, and of course it was a long time before people were able to attend to them, or give them anything to eat and drink. They also had that same thought in their minds. They kept it there until the delay went to great length, and their hunger, and their thirst for the wine, increased. Then their patience gave way, and they began to discuss the point, and good hands they were at doing it. But later on, when they found that the food and the drink were good and strong and substantial and fine-flavoured, they did not pretend to have ever mentioned any such thing—the rascals!

It was getting on into the night. The company within had eaten and drunk enough, and so had those of the broken legs and the back-biting tongues outside. The priest looked at Dermot. Dermot looked at Sive. Sive looked at Cormac. Cormac looked about him. The company rose to their feet. Sive went out. She returned again immediately, wearing the red cloak, and you would think the golden drops on the cape were lighted candles.

Then the couple went up before the priest, and he

married them.

When they were married and the blessing of the Church read over them, John Kittach took up a clean plate and he put a gold guinea on the plate. Shiana put a guinea on the plate. Short Mary put a guinea from herself upon it. So with them all round. There was no one who did not put some money upon it. When they had all been gone over, Cormac came and put three guineas on the plate, and, well became Sive! she put three guineas from herself upon it.

"Indeed, Father," said the big tinker, "I think it is a good thing for your reverence that it is not in the 'City-far-away' that this marriage has been

performed."

"Indeed, Patrick," said the priest, "I think so, too, and that it is no less a good thing for all those who are here to-night. And I also think that the least we all may do is to ask the God of glory, praise be to Him! to give a long happy life to Cormac and Sive, and if they are well off to-night in the grace of God and of the world, that they may be seven times better off this night next year, and if not better off, may they not be worse off! Grand-children to your grandchildren, Dermot!"

"Amen, O Lord!" said the company, again and

again.

While that "amen" was going on, the married

couple slipped out. The two horses and the coach were ready outside the door, and the driver sitting up in his own place. The beggars saw the coach and gathered round it. When Cormac was getting into the coach he threw a handful of small money among the beggars. You would think they would tear the throats out of each other striving to get at the money. While they were clawing and crushing and pushing each other the coach drove off. When the beggars found the coach going off they raised a shout. It was a loud shout—a powerful, vigorous shout, that would make your ears sing. But from that night to this, no one has been able to make out rightly whether that shout was a shout of derision or a shout of praise.

But it did not matter. Sive did not care which. The man of the colt, or any other man or any woman, could not now say that anyone married her without a fortune. If the shout was a shout of derision she did not grudge them their shouting until morning if it was any satisfaction to their minds. If it was a shout of praise, it was praise thrown away. She set no more value upon the praise than she did upon the wind blowing. As for Cormac, he did not think of derision or of praise in the matter. As was usual with him, he took it all very seriously. The coach drove on along the road to the north-east and no further remembrance remained with Sive or with Cormac of derision or of praise.

Cormac was contented. He knew that through the act Sive had done, and through the benefit she had conferred upon the King, there was no fear but that her husband would get friendship and favour from the King. Sive was contented. At length and at last she did not care what matches might be broken or mended. "He was a stubborn man, but even if he was," she thought, "what was to be done but to give him his own way! He would be the very mischief if that would not satisfy him." Grey Dermot was contented. And it was he himself that knew best why. All the neighbours were very well contented. I suppose they also knew the reason why.

When Sive was going she gave the keys to her father. But she did not leave much wealth stored behind the locks. As she was going out she called

Michael's mother aside.

"It would be as well for you to stay here," said she, "and to take care of this place. Michael could mind the shop and sell the leather. This poor man is too old. Whenever it is God's will to call him away there will be no one to come between you and this house. I know there is no fear that you will wrong my father. As long as he lives I will support him. Whatever money the sale of the leather will make, you and Michael may have. Will you take the place?"

"Indeed I will, of course," said the widow. "Well! will I take it? What a question! Indeed I will take the place, and I will let my own little house to my brother's wife. She is leaving the house in which she is now. And then, if it should happen that you would want this house back again I can get my

own house back again in the same way."

"Very good," said Sive. "There is some money

for you which will do until I send you more."

Michael was astonished by and by when his mother told him to go west and bring his clothes,

and her own clothes, and to lock the door after

him, as they would not be going home at all.

"What is coming over you, mother?" said Michael, "or why will we not be going home? Surely there isn't any other claim on the place? Cormac could not be coming now to demand possession from us. I think he has got something else to mind now."

"There is not, my boy," said she, "any claim on the place, nor any person coming to demand possession from us." And she told him the arrangement Sive had made.

Michael looked about him. "And does this house belong to us now?" said he.

"It does, my boy," said she, "provided that we

take good care of Dermot."

"It is a fine big roomy house," said he. "Little I thought that I and my mother would come to

live in it! What a change in the world!"

"Go along now, my boy," said she, "and look after the people, and don't let anyone be neglected, and let nobody be thirsty or hungry during the night. They will be all dancing directly, and the dancing will make them thirsty. Look after them, Michael, and let them have the drink and the food before they have time to ask for it."

"Very good, mother," said he.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FAIRY MUSIC.

Never was there such music and dancing as they had in Dermot's kitchen that night. There were two pipers and two fiddlers and a harper, so that the music never ceased. When one piper stopped the other would go on, and when one fiddler stopped the other fiddler would go on; and it was oftener the whole five would be going on together than that any one of them was idle—in the beginning of the night, at all events.

There was a fine big broad flag in the floor opposite the fire, and if you were beyond in the room listening to what went on, you would swear it was a shower of shoes that was falling upon that flag all night long, except that the shoes kept time with the music. I promise you Nora of the Causeway and her two brothers got hot dancing, and that they made others of the dancers get hotter.

When they used to be tired with dancing Michael was ready with drinks for them, but he did not appear to be watching them to give them, to them. The dancers did not take much of the wine. They knew that if they drank much of it it would go not only into their heads, but into their feet too, and if the wine got into their feet there would be an end to the dancing.

The company used to sit down for a while, now and again, between two turns of dancing, and one of them would sing a fine stirring tuneful song. There were some of them that had splendid chest-

voices and head-voices, and it would raise gloom from one's heart to hear a good song from them.

There was one of the pipers who knew fairy music. He often used to play the fairy music on the pipes, of his own accord; but it was very hard to get him to play it when he was asked to do so. He used to say it was not right to play it to people because it was too eerie.

When they were all tired and fagged and worn out and exhausted by the dancing, they asked the piper to play the fairy music to them. He refused for a long time. He said the music was too eerie, and that it would not do to play it in a company. They gave him another drink of the King's wine, and they went on urging him until he had to yield. He got the pipes ready, and filled the bag. The company became as silent as if they had neither life nor breath.

Soon the people heard a low murmuring sound, deep and tender, fine and soft and smooth, moving round the house outside. Then people thought there was something like a rush of wind accompanying the movement of sound, and that it was the wind that was producing the sound, and not the pipes. Then a beautiful melody broke through the sound, and both the melody and the low murmuring came into the house. The murmur grew stronger, and there came a sort of trembling and swaying in the sound of it. Soon there was heard another sound. trembling and swaying in the same manner, with a sweet, delightful melody running through it, while it and the other sound and melody did not detract from, but rather enhanced each other, so that the melody was improved by the sound, and the sound

was the sweeter for the melody. Then a third sound arose, trembling and swaying, and having blended with it an exquisite air of its own. That third sound startled everyone. They could have sworn it was a human voice!

Then there gushed forth as it were a torrent of music, the sweetest and clearest, the smoothest and most pleasing that anyone present had ever heard. It mingled with the low, sweet murmuring, and with the human voice, and with the sort of wind that seemed to accompany them, and the whole harmony swept round the house in a whirl. The voice and the sound became stronger, and the mingling and the whirling more rapid, until the people thought that a whirlwind was actually spinning through the house. It was here, and it was there. It would spring in one direction, and then in another. They thought it seemed to lie down and rush along the floor. Then, as the music would seem to make a spring, the whirlwind would fly up among the beams of the roof and sweep round overhead, so that the people imagined they could hear the wings of birds in it. Then they fancied they heard, through the music, a sob as of weeping. Presently it would turn into loud laughter. Then they would hear, distinctly sounding, through the music, what seemed to be the voice of a child. Soon another child's voice was answering that one, the two voices answering each other and keeping time with the music. Then a third voice arose, like the voice of a young woman, and none of the listeners had ever heard a human voice so musical, so beautiful, so sweet. After a moment another woman's voice replied to that one, and if the first voice was musical, even more musical

and sweet was the second voice; and they kept time with each other and with the music in perfect harmony. Then, as if a door had been opened, all the music swelled and rose with great power. The movement became more rapid, the energy grew greater, and an added sweetness came into the voices. They went rising above each other and sinking below each other. They went whirling around each other. They were down upon the floor. They were up among the rafters. They were in this corner, in that corner, in the other corner—till a kind of nervousness began to come upon the people, who were giving side-looks over their shoulders to see if anyone had spoken.

Then the music again increased in power, as if another door had been opened, larger than the first. There arose a swelling and a strength and a volume of musical sound. It turned and it twisted and it rolled along the floor, and along the walls, and along the roof of the house, overhead. It was sometimes a bellow, and sometimes a wild shout, and sometimes a loud weeping, and sometimes a heartbreaking cry, that you would think would draw a sigh from a stone. Again it was a burst of laughter and merriment and delight and gladness, such as you would think would raise the dead out of the earth—the women's voices and the child-voices speaking and responding distinctly through the loudest of the bellowing, through the bitterest of the weeping, through the merriest of the laughter: and then there would be heard now and again, amid the whole commotion, a long, sharp, wild, terrible shriek, which would freeze the blood of all who heard it.

Then the people heard, rushing along together, like the sound of a sea, the bellowing and the shouting and the shricking, the weeping and the laughter, the child-voices and the women's voices. These were all interfolded and intertwined and overlapped. They were under each other and over each other and within each other. They were in one place, and in another place, and in yet a third place; then they were everywhere at once, till the people began to think that all the turmoil was inside their own ears. Then another sound was heard in the music, a sound like the low rumbling of thunder. It swept along the floor, swelling and decreasing in its roaring. It went through the timbers of the house, and through the wood of the chairs, and through the people's bones, quivering and surging. It became stronger and stronger until it gathered to itself all the music and all the voices, and swept them round the house as in a whirlpool. Then the thunder grew yet stronger and heavier, and all became more violent—the whirling and the quivering and surging in the wood and in the people's bones —until all the listeners began to feel a palpitation of the heart and a dizziness in the head.

Then one of the child-voices went away out through the chimney. One of the women's voices followed it. Then a woman's voice went out through the chimney, and a child-voice followed it. Then a shriek went out by the chimney, and another shriek followed it. Then there went out through the chimney the first human voice that was heard in the music. The other different sorts of music followed them by degrees. Soon there was nothing heard within but the thunder, surging and quivering. Then the thunder grew lower and lower, and the surging and the quivering grew weaker and weaker, the energy slackened, the power lessened, until the thunder was no more than a low murmur. Then the murmur grew fainter and fainter till it was only a breath. And then it stopped.

The cock crew!

The moment the cock crew the Maid of the Liss gave a shriek and fell down in a faint. No one stirred. You would imagine they were all bewitched. At last the big tinker jumped up.

"Why," said he, "what's the matter with you all? Two of you women take that girl and carry

her out into the air."

They took her out into the air and she came to. "Where is the priest?" said somebody.

"He went home early in the night, ever so long

ago," said Michael.

Soon the Maid of the Liss came in again, quite well and strong, and arguing petulantly with the women who had carried her out that they need not have taken the trouble; that they were too officious, for there was nothing the matter with her any more than with any of themselves; that they had better have let her alone; what made them so busy?

The piper struck up another tune, in which there was no fairy music, and the dancing went on again as gaily as if it had been the beginning of the night. The cock crew again and again, but neither the Maid of the Liss nor anybody else paid any attention to him. The music and the dancing went on, the pipers playing by turns, and the flagstone being well beaten by the shoes; the food and the drink

going round according as people wanted them; until the daylight came in at the door.

The harper was found fast asleep, and one of the pipers drunk. But neither sleep nor drunkenness touched the man of the fairy music, although he had taken plenty of the wine.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHENCE THE FAIRY MUSIC CAME.

Before the day had fully dawned the company had dispersed and the people had all gone home except the big tinker and the man of the fairy music and Michael and his mother. Those four were doing their best to tidy up the house and put everything back into its own place. The fairy music was troubling Michael's mind. He wanted very much to find out how that piper had got hold of it. He watched until he found an opportunity, and then he asked him the question.

"Listen, John," said he. "That was wonderful music that you played for us last night. I never heard the like of it. I don't believe there is another man in Ireland who could play such music."

John did not pretend to have heard him.

"I suppose," said Michael, "it isn't everybody that could acquire music of that kind at all. How did you manage to get it, John?"

"Ask something else, Michael," said John.

That did not put Michael off the subject. He waited until John had gone, and then he said to the big tinker, "Stop a bit, Patrick, and have something to eat, after the night's work."

Patrick did not think that would be in any way

inconvenient to him, and he stayed.

By-and-by, when Patrick had eaten something, and when he had drunk another drop of wine, Michael said, in a careless sort of way, "Patrick, was not that music we heard last night wonderful! I never heard the like of it, and I have often heard beautiful music. If I hadn't been looking at him with my own eyes, and listening to him with my own ears, I would not believe that any mortal man could bring such music out of pipes."

"And he couldn't, either, unless he got help to it," said Patrick. "Didn't you notice the whirlwind? And didn't you hear the human voices, and the crying, and the laughing, and the shrieking? No sooner did the music begin than they gathered into the house to us. I tell you I believe there were far more of them there, dancing to the music, than there were of ourselves. They began to go away when the time of cockcrow was drawing near to them. And see how the piper stopped exactly before the cock crew! It is a wonder to me that they do not carry the piper off with them. If I were in his place I would not play that music, however much I might be pressed to do it. It would be far better for him to have sense. 'The jar does not always come unbroken from the well."

"I wonder where in the world he learnt that

music, or how he got hold of it," said Michael.

"That question is often put to him," said Patrick,

"and he never makes any answer but, 'Ask some-

thing else."

"I declare on my honour," said Michael, "that I asked him that question a while ago, and that that is exactly the answer he made me. 'Ask

something else,' said he to me."

"I heard," said Patrick, "that the way of it was that he was coming home from Cork one night with a new set of pipes which he had bought, and that he went astray, although he knew the place perfectly. Coming on toward Dripsey Bridge was where he went astray. A bewilderment came upon him, and he found himself on the bank of a river, in a place his eye had never rested on! He examined the ground under his feet, and a hedge that was near him, and a cave that was in a rock there, to see if he knew them, and he did not know them. At that moment he heard, at the other side of the river, the most beautiful music he had ever heard. What do you say to him if he didn't fit up the new pipes and begin to play the same music, along with the musician at the other side! He always had great nerve. All the fairies in Ireland would not frighten him. In the twinkling of an eye the whole inch on the bank of the river was filled with people moving over and hither among each other as if it were some sort of dance they were going on with. Soon the music at the other side changed. When it did, the man at this side took up the change without stop or stumble, and without missing a beat. The music at the other side was changed a second time. Well became the man at this side, he took up the change the instant it was made.

"For every turn and change that took place in

the music, a corresponding change took place in the movement of the people, or in the dancing, if it was dancing. Things went on in that way between them, at both sides of the river, until some time well on in the night. He does not remember how he parted with them, but when the daylight came he woke out of his sleep inside the eve of a lime-kiln which was there at the roadside, with the new pipes beside him. No sooner was he fully awake than he fixed the pipes on him and began to play the music again, exactly as he had played it during the night. He played it from beginning to end. again and again, and he put into it correctly every twist and turn and change, as they put them in it during the night for him when they were playing it on the other side of the river, until he knew it by heart and there was no fear of his ever forgetting any part of it. When he had satisfied his mind upon that, he stood up and came out of the limekiln and looked about him. The road and the fences were full of people all round the limekiln. They had been collecting there while he was playing the music so as to master it. According as one or two would come, they would stop to listen to the music, until the place was crowded with them. They were full of wonder and amazement, because they knew that people used to hear that same music often in the same place, at night; but that was the first time it had ever been heard during the day. When they saw 'Eerie John' coming out of the eye of the limekiln, and when they realised that it was he that had been playing the weird music, they shook their heads and said among themselves that he would not escape long without being carried off.

He saluted them, and they saluted him, but none of them asked him what made him play that music.

They were half afraid of him.

"He came home, and it was not long until he fell sick. No one expected that he would ever rise from that sickness. People said it was those for whom he had played the music that were taking him with them in order that they themselves should have a piper as good as the piper whom those at the other side of the river had, or perhaps better. But whatever was the reason, they failed to carry him off that time. He recovered in spite of them, and he has the music. And there you have the story just as I myself heard it, of how Eerie John got the fairy music. He only plays it very seldom, and that is very little wonder. If they come around him always as they came around him last night, it must be that they take great delight in the music he plays, and if they have that delight in the music, they will carry the musician off home with them sooner or later. It is not right for him to be playing that music at all. He has been often advised not to play it. I have given him that advice myself, but it was no use for me to give it. He would not say 'I will,' or 'I won't.' You could not make out what he intended to do. It is no harm to call him 'Eerie John.' I don't think he has a bit of fear of them."

"Perhaps, Patrick," said Michael, "that he knows himself that he need have no fear of them. Perhaps he has good friends among them, and that he is not

in danger."

"Perhaps so," said Patrick, "But I would rather give myself up to God than that I should have anything at all to do with them or they with me.

There was a time last night, when all the thunder and commotion was going on, when I promise you there was no place I wished so much to be in as at home. I took a look at the face of the musician and I almost thought it was not himself that was there at all. There was a kind of light in his eyes and in his face and round his mouth, that would make you think he was looking at them and that he recognised them!"

"Perhaps he was too," said Michael.

"Perhaps so," said Patrick. "But there's one thing certain; Eerie John is too eerie for me."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BAREFOOTED WOMAN.

After the match between Sive and Cormac, it was not long until two other matches were made. A match was made for the Maid of the Liss with a brother of Nora of the Causeway, and a match was made for Nora herself with one of the King's men. He met her on the fair-green on the day when the horses were distributed. He had a house in the city near the house in which Cormac and Sive were going to live. As soon as he went home he asked leave of absence for a month, and he got it, and he came and married Nora and took her away with him. Her unmarried brother went off with them, expecting to get a place in the King's

army. That left the Causeway and all it contained to the Maid of the Liss and her husband.

When that was done, all was quiet. Any day from that forward, if you happened to be passing by that house of Shiana's, you would hear, as usual, the tapping of the little hammers, the low whistling of the workmen, and the drawing and tightening of the waxed thread. If you went in you would see the soogaun chair and the malvogue, and you would hear the long heavy breathing of Shiana himself as he worked vigorously. But there was no knowing when anyone had heard "torment" or "trouble" upon the "bristly hag" from him.

You would not see Michael there. He was below at Grey Dermot's house, keeping the shop and selling the leather and receiving the money, and he felt himself to be a substantial, influential man. You would think it would not cause him a bit of surprise if he were asked to go security for half the parish.

As time went on, people used to notice that there was a change coming over the disposition and mind and habits of Shiana. Everybody knew that he had always been a peculiar man, with a peculiar disposition and a peculiar mind. They all felt convinced that no matter how intimate you might be with him you would never have any chance of getting to know the inside of his mind. But people felt, or thought they felt, that he was not the same Shiana of late. It was never his habit to talk much, but of late he scarcely spoke to anyone. When people used to speak to him, they would get very little talk out of him, but what they did get was in a low voice, and gentle.

Sometimes he used to drive on at his work so violently that he would be in streams of perspiration. At other times he would remain ever so long with his left elbow on his knee, and his left hand under his jaw, looking out of the door and over at the hill. and not making a single motion any more than if he had been without life or breath. Often, when he used to be in that brown study, people would see him holding his right hand in his bosom as if he had a hard grip of something that he had there, hidden. When he used to come out of that sort of trance, a deep breath would come from his chest, and a sigh out of his heart, that you would not be the better of hearing. The workmen were filled with wonder. but they did not pretend to notice anything. To tell the truth, they felt afraid of him. They did not know what in all the world was the matter with him. They could only say, as Michael said to his mother the first time he noticed the state of things, that it must be that there was some very grievous trouble upon him. But as to what the trouble was, or what was the cause of it, they knew absolutely nothing.

John Kittach noticed the change. He noticed the strain that was upon the heart and mind of the man, but he was more puzzled than ever as to what was the cause of it. There was Sive married and not a word from anybody about any promise of marriage between herself and Shiana. From the day when Shiana himself was west at the house speaking to Short Mary, she had not uttered as much as a single word about the match, nor about the talk that took place between them. Other messages came to them regarding matches, but she did not let her father take any notice of them. She used

to give him no reason except that she did not like them.

It was spread about the district that Shiana was in some trouble of mind, but when people saw all those women married, and that he did not take a bit of notice of it, the tattlers were in a desperate fix. They would have liked to say he was losing his wits about some one of those women, but they could not say that. He was at the two other weddings as well as at Sive's wedding, and it was very easy to see that he was not a bit interested in any of the other two women any more than he was in Sive. It could not be said that he was losing his wits about Short Mary, because there was no one taking her away from him. The talkers would have liked to say that his reason was giving way, that he was suffering from some mental derangement that he had inherited. But they could not say that, because there was not a man in the parish of more decisive judgment than he, nor one who could give shrewder advice, nor one more clear-sighted upon an arbitration than he. The end of it was that the talkers had to give up the pursuit, for they failed to reach the truth from any point.

Shiana himself knew right well, though, what was the matter with him. The last year of the thirteen years was going at a hand-gallop. According as he was moving on towards the end of the time the poor fellow used to be thinking more closely and more constantly upon what was before him, until the thought hardly ever left his mind. There used to be such a strain and such an oppression upon his heart and upon his mind from constantly dwelling upon that one thought, that he used to

think an hour longer than a day while the hour was passing; and then when the hour would be past, he used to think there had not been two minutes in it. He used to think the day, while the day would be passing, longer than a week; and when the day was spent he used to imagine that there had not been even one hour in it. He used to think the night longer than a year, and when the morning came he used to think there had been no night at all. But he used to think they all, hours and minutes and nights and days, were running a race against each other, they were going at such a pace—and nothing between him and the end of the time but the few of them that were unspent.

Often, when he used to go to bed, when he would be lying on the bed without a single wink of sleep coming to him, but his heart palpitating and his eyes wide open, he would get up and go out, and up the hill, until he reached the moss-plot where the barefooted woman gave him the beautiful gem. He used to hope that perhaps he would see her there again. He did not see her, but his visit would not be in vain. He used to feel that she was there beside him, and that she used to hear his speech and understand the trouble that was upon him. He used to argue and dispute with her because she did not show herself to him. He would repeat the words she spoke the day he saw her, and remind her of them, and ask her if she remembered the promise she had given him, and beg her, for the love of the Saviour, not to fail him when the terror came. No voice or word used to come from her, but even so, he was not without an answer to his words. The conviction used to come to his mind from her, as

well as if she had spoken, "that he need not have any fear if he would only put his trust in God." When he had spent a while of the night in that way in her company on the hill, a calm used come upon him. The strain and the oppression used to lift from his heart, so that he used to wonder what it was that took away his troubles. When he saw the glimmering of the day coming he used to face for home, and go and lie down in his bed as if he had spent the night in it.

Well, at length the last day was close upon him.

"It was thirteen years ago to-morrow," said he to himself, "that I left home to buy some leather. I had three shillings in my pocket. They could not go very far, but they were all I had. I was asked for them, for the Saviour's sake. I gave them. I could not help it. How could I have kept them? They were all I had, but even so, they were not mine. Everything belongs to God. I should have been only keeping His own from Him, praise be to Him! I did not keep them at all events, whatever the result may be for me now—I was strictly bound by the virtue of the Holy Things—I accepted the bond, strictly—by my own free will."

He would take up a shoe and begin to work. Soon he would fling it away again. He would walk out and look about him, as if he were expecting somebody to come. The men thought he was expecting some one, and that probably the expected person would soon come. If they had known who it was that was expected, most likely they would not have stayed long in the place. They knew nothing about it, and they went on working as hard as they could. When it was time to stop, they got up to go home.

"Wait a moment, men," said Shiana. "Perhaps it might happen that I should be away from home to-morrow, and that I should not be back here in time to give you the week's wages. It is as well for you to take the money now. I do not think there is any danger of your not doing the work honestly." And he handed them the money.

As soon as they were gone, he went off up the hill. There was a cliff on the northern side of the hill: it used to be called the Ravens' Cliff. He went and sat on the top of that cliff. He was looking down upon the broken rocks that were at the bottom of the cliff below, and he was thinking in his mind what a shattering a man's bones would get if he were flung down. He left that place, and he went along the hill westward until he was on the top of another hill that was on the western side of the glen. The Dogs' Rock was the name of that hill. He went into a cave in that hill. "Diarmuid's Bed" was the name of the cave. There was another cave over against that one, called "Grania's Bed." He remained in the cave for a good while, thinking of all the beautiful Fenian stories he had ever heard, about Diarmuid and Grania, and Finn and the Fiana, and all their doings.

When it was nightfall he returned to the mossplot and lay down in it. The weather was dry and the sky was clear. The moss was fine and dry and warm because the sun had been shining on the plot all day. The plot faced south, so that there was shelter in it from any breath of wind that there was from the north. He was lying on the moss-plot listening to the whispering and breathing of the gentle wind through the heather round him, while none of the wind came upon himself. From the exercise he had given himself walking the hill, and from the warmth of the moss, and from that lullaby of the wind through the heather, the poor fellow

was soon sleeping soundly.

Some time in the night he felt something like a person's hand upon his head, and his sleep left him. Sleep left him so completely that he felt as if there were not a hair's weight in any of his limbs. He looked aside. She was there kneeling at his left shoulder, with one hand on his head, and she was looking into his eyes. It was the barefooted woman. He remained looking at her while she looked into his eyes. The night was very black and dark. He could see the sky up above her head. There was neither moon nor star in the sky, but it was like an intensely black mass, high and vast and empty. He was looking at the woman's countenance, at her eyes and at her brow and at her face. He had no light to see by but the light which was coming from the countenance itself. He continued looking at her. He could not help it. He thought his eves had never beheld any human face so beautiful as the face of that woman! If he were to get all Ireland for it he could not take his eyes off her. As he continued looking at her the beauty increased, and the emanation of bliss and joy increased, in her brow and in her eyes and in her mouth, and she looked as if she were about to open her mouth to speak, while he was waiting for the word to come. The bliss and the joy poured in through his eyes and back into his brain and down into his heart and breast, so that there came upon him such a sense of happiness, and contentment of mind, and consolation of heart, that he could have wished that neither he nor she should leave that place for ever. The longer and the more intently he looked, the more the brow became brighter, and the eyes nobler and more loving, and the mouth sweeter and gentler and more smiling, and her face shone with increasing light, and inspired increasing joy and increasing gladness, as she seemed to be just going to open her mouth to speak to him: until he thought his heart was going out of his breast to her, by the intensity of his happiness and bliss, and love for her.

At last she spoke.

"He is coming to you, Shiana!" said she. "The enemy is almost close to you," said she. And if it was a great gladness and delight to look at her beautiful, noble countenance, even greater was the gladness and delight of listening to the sound of her speech.

Shiana had not a care in the world as to who was coming to him or where the enemy was, so long as he was looking up at her, and listening to her, with her hand upon his head, and, to crown all the happiness, realising in his own mind that it was through regard and sympathy and love for himself that she had come to him and had appeared to him.

"Shiana," said she, "the foe is coming to you, full of rage and malice. Your foe is coming to take vengeance upon you for all the evil you have inflicted upon him during those thirteen years. To-morrow night he will come. He has made a slight mistake. He thinks that it is at midnight to-morrow night the time will be spent. The time will not be spent for four hours after that. The bargain was, under the

virtue of the Holy Things, that the purse should be in your possession and should remain with you for thirteen years in full. That day that you went to the fair to buy a horse and a milch cow some one took the purse from you, and it was out of your possession for four hours. It was I that took it from you. I took it from you unknown to him. Had you bought that cow or that horse and paid money for the purchase, you would have violated the contract, and he would have had power to work his will upon you. When I saw what you were bent upon, I took the purse from you, so that even if you bought, there should be no danger that you would pay. It was to buy leather you got the money. He is watching you ever since, to see if you would buy anything but leather. You did not. It was well for yourself that you did not. You paid out a good deal of the money in other ways, but that did not affect the contract. No contract would have power to forbid charity. Whatever money you gave away for the Saviour's sake was given in charity. The money you spent in any other way, apart from the buying of the leather, was made out of the work. It was your own."

"I give thanks to the Eternal Father, who created you!" said Shiana, as he looked up at her. It was not in answer to her words he said it, but through the great joy that was in his heart because of her being there near him and he looking up at her and listening to the sweet music of her speech.

"He does not know," said she, "that the purse spent those four hours out of your possession. He was bound not to let anybody take the purse from you. He himself believes that he did not. He is waiting for the hour of midnight to-morrow night to work his will upon you, and to inflict vengeance upon you for all that you have done to spite him for the past thirteen years, giving alms for the sake of the Saviour out of the purse which he himself gave to you, whereas it was not for giving alms he gave it to you, but in the hope that it would cause harm and mischief and misfortune to yourself and to every Christian who should ever get a half-penny of it into his hand."

"I give thanks to the Eternal Father who created you,—and to Christ who redeemed you,—and to the Holy Ghost who sanctified you!" said Shiana. When he had said those words he wondered at himself, because it seemed to him that it was not his own voice that was coming out of his chest or out

of his mouth.

"Show me," said she, "that thing I gave you that day you parted with the good young woman for the Saviour's sake."

He drew the jewel out of his bosom and handed it to her.

"It is not as bright as it was that day, but it is not so very bad," said she, and she took the little ball into her hand. Instantly the ball shone up again, in the centre of her palm, just as it had shone the first day, so that Shiana could hardly look at it, and when he did look at it, little blue spots came before his eyes, just as they would to one who would look straight at the sun.

"Here," said the woman. "Put it away again and keep it about you. You will want it to-morrow night." And she handed him back the jewel. He put it away again in his bosom where he had it before.

She opened her left hand. The shilling was there in the middle of her palm, the same shilling that he had given to her that first day when he was going to buy the leather.

"Here," said she. "Put this away also." He

took the shilling and put it away.

"Listen attentively now, Shiana," said the woman, "to what I have to say to you. When it is coming on toward midnight, to-morrow night, take the soogaun chair and place it exactly in the position in which it was that day it was stuck to the ground, and place that shilling on the ground, in under the centre of the chair, and cover it over so that it cannot be seen. Go then yourself and sit on your working-seat and be working as hard as you can. When the enemy comes do not pretend anything, but go on with the work. When he bids you go with him, tell him to wait until the time comes. If you succeed in making him sit in the chair you will have the upper hand of him. But remember this especially—whatever thing he may tell you to do, for your life do not do it. Do not do anything he tells you to do."

"I give—thanks—to the Eternal Father—"
While Shiana was saying those words, and failing to bring them out properly, she was moving away, moving away, moving away; and the light on her face was getting fainter, and fainter, and fainter. His eyelids were closing together, closing together, closing together, closing together. Before he could finish pronouncing the words she was gone, and he was sound asleep.

CHAPTER XXX.

AWAITING THE END.

When he came out of that sleep the sun was shining upon him from the east, and it was nice and comfortable, without too much heat in it. The sky was cloudless and the ground was clear of mist, and you would think there was a hive of bees, with a swarm rising out of it, somewhere near the place, the humming of the bees was so vigorous and so lively in the heather round about. Shiana had a view of the country for twenty miles, eastward and southward and westward. There to the east was Knock Raheen, and Little Mushera, and Big Mushera, and Moul na hornan, and Muine Fliuch, 5 and Derryliah, 6 and Cabarach. There to the southeast was Carriganyilla,7 and further to the southeast Sleeveen,8 near Macroom, and twenty miles east from that the mist over the city of Cork. There in front of him, due south, were Dun da ryarc, 9 and Kilmurry, and Magh Shanaglish, 10 and the districts of Ross Carbery, and a great deal of beautiful land on the sea-coast. There to the west were Shehall

¹ Cnoc Ráitín, "the hill of the little rath."

² mulrine beag. 3 muirine mon,

⁴ meall na h-Onnan, "the knoll of the barley."
5 An muine flind, "the wet moor."
6 An Toine liat, "the grey oak-wood."
7 Capais an Siella, "the gillie's rock."
8 An Sleibin, "the little mountain."

⁹ Oun oá Radanc, "the fort (or hill) with two prospects.
10 más Seanastair, "the plain of the old church."

¹¹ Seite, as a common noun=a hide; skin.

and Neoin and the rest of them, as the poet said :-

"Ugly Iveragh of the grey churls, Glen Cara where neither corn nor food grows, Those high ugly hills of Desmond to the west, Places to which Patrick never gave a blessing."

Or, as the other poet said in reply to that one:-

"Beautiful Iveragh of the freehearted and generous men,

Glen Cara, where corn and food grow.

Those fine high mountains of Desmond in the West,

Places which Patrick left it to God to bless."

He was looking around at them for a while, recognising them and naming them, and thinking that there could hardly be under the sun another view so beautiful as that view which was spread out before his own eyes on that summer morning. Then it was that the events of the night and the words of the barefooted woman suddenly recurred to his mind. He thought at first that he had been dreaming. He stuck his hand into his pocket. True enough, the shilling was there in his pocket, the pocket into which he had put it when the woman gave it to him in the night. There was something in the business that was not a dream. The whole matter rushed to his mind at once; the woman's words, and the shilling, and the enemy, and the instructions he had been given regarding the chair. He sprang up. There was his house yonder. He turned his back to it and went along the hill westward. He went west to the

top of Knock na nullaun, and west along the top of Carrig na Modry,² and over Ballan Vauma,³ and west by the top of Coom a' Ghyair.4

The day was getting warm, and he began to feel thirsty. He went into a house and asked for a drink. The woman of the house knew him. She had a good right to know him. Many a time before had he given her a good "hand-reach" of money. But for him there would be very little heard of her in the place. She brought him a jug of goats' milk and a big piece of bread and a roll of butter. He ate the food, and they talked. She knew, as everybody knew, that he was burdened with some great trouble of his own. She perceived it at that moment more plainly than ever. She did not pretend, though, that she noticed anything. He got up and walked out, and where should he face but straight up Mullach an Esh.5 She looked after him, and I can tell you she was surprised when she saw him facing the mountain. She did not know what she ought to do. What she did was to turn in home and to spend part of the day crying. She felt sure that something harmful was coming over him. She threw herself on her knees and began to pray for him, beseeching God to keep him safe from all evil.

He went on up the mountain until he was on the fine wide platform which is up on the summit. If it was a large view he had in the morning from the moss-plot, still larger was the view he had now, but

¹ Cnoc na n-tilán, a corruption of cnoc na ngollán, "the hill of the pillar-stones."

² Capais na maonaí, "the Dogs' Rock." beul an mama, "the mouth of the Pass."

4 Cum an Javan, "the Hound's Hollow."

5 mullac an Orr, "the Fawn's Peak."

the view now was not more beautiful, because the sky was clearer in the morning. He had a view to the west of Claedach, and of the Paps, and of Mangerton, and of the Killarney lakes,1 and of Coraun Tuohill.2 and of the rest of the Black Reeks. When he was tired of looking at them he moved backward and forward on the summit, picking the monadauns and eating them. When he had spent a while at that he went eastward along the brow of the mountain until he was on the top of Knock Lickascaw,4 where he had a view of Clara to the north, and of the great Galtees, far away off to the north-east. When the sun was falling toward the west he turned westward again to the top of Mullach an Esh. He picked some more of the monadauns, and then he turned down to the house where he had got the morning's meal. The woman was surprised and delighted when she saw him coming into her house. She did not know where he had spent the day, but she did not care, when she saw him coming again safe and sound. She did nothing, however, but welcome him and give him a cheery salutation, showing no surprise and not appearing to notice anything. But I can assure you that she heartily thanked God in her own mind.

"Sit down there for a while, Shiana," said she, "and I'll engage to make you a treat that perhaps hasn't been made for you this long time."

He sat down.

She went out into the haggart to the best stack that was there, and pulled two good sheaves out

¹ loc léin.

² Copán Tuatai .

³ mónacón, a little crimson berry, found on the high parts of mountains.

⁴ Cnoc lice Spát, "the hill of the stone of shadow."

of the middle of the stack. She brought the two sheaves in with her. She swept the flag of the fireplace, and she washed it, and dried it. Then she lighted a splinter of bog-deal, and she burned the two sheaves on the flag. But only the straw and the chaff were burnt; the grain was not burnt, but it was beautifully dried, far better than it would be dried on the flag of the mill. Then she gathered up the dried corn and took it out, and she let the wind through it, so that all the ashes of the straw and chaff were cleared out of it completely. When she had it nice and clean she brought it in, and put it in the quern and ground it. Then she put it through a coarse sieve and afterwards through a fine sieve. so that not a particle of chaff remained in it. Then she put the meal in a wooden bowl, and mixed some young cream with the meal, and put a spoon in the bowl, and gave it to Shiana. He ate it, and he thought he had never eaten, and never tasted. better food, it was so wholesome and so substantial and so strong.

When he had eaten the food he handed the bowl to her. "I declare solemnly, Nance Casey," said he, "you are right! It is the nicest food I have ever tasted. You take the palm. You may well say you have given me a treat, a delicacy the like of which was never given me until to-day. And see what a very short time it is since it was out in the stack, and there I have eaten it!"

"Its own straw and chaff dry it," said she, "better far than the flag of the mill does."

The sun was setting when Shiana was leaving that house. By the time he was at the moss-plot it was nightfall. By the time he was at home some

of the early part of the night was already gone. He lit one of the night-work candles. He took the soogaun chair and placed it standing exactly in the place where it was the day it was stuck to the ground at that spot. He put the shilling in under it in the centre, as he had been told to do. He threw a little dust down upon the shilling so that it could not be seen. Then he sat in his work-seat and began to work. When he had been working for a while he thought the hour of midnight could not be far off. He thought no trial he had ever suffered had been hard compared with staying there waiting and watching to see when the Evil One would come. If he had not had the work on hand he could never have endured the waiting. It was as much as he could do to stand it, although he was working as hard as his arms could draw the thread. When he used to think an hour should be spent, he would look at what he had done, and it would be only half an hour's work. He would keep on putting in the stitches as fast as he was able to drive the awl. Byand-by he would think that two hours should be gone. He would look at the work done, and it would be only as much as a man would do within a quarter of an hour, working at his ease. At last the disturbance and oppression and strain that were weighing upon his mind put the watching of the time out of his head in some way, so that the time rushed on unknown to him. He had no idea that the time was spent when he suddenly felt as if there were some one in the room. He raised his head. The Black Man was standing there facing him!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BLACK MAN CHECKED.

The two looked at each other. The look was not a very gentle one on the part of either of them. Shiana felt the same terror coming upon him as he had felt the first day. He took a hard grip of the jewel that he had in his bosom, and the terror left him. He looked steadily at his foe. He saw the horns and the malignant forehead, and the baleful. raging eyes, and the goat-beard, and the tail, and the hoof. But he saw something that he did not see the first day. He saw on the fingers of the hands great long curved claws, such as there would be on the talons of an eagle. And there was a point on each of those claws as fine and as sharp as there was upon the awl he had in his hand. Again his courage was on the point of giving way when he thought of the state he would be in if those claws should get at his skin! He pressed his hand again upon the gem which he had in his bosom, and that terror left him also. The Black Man noticed how the terror would forsake Shiana, but he did not understand it. He was wondering what it was that was banishing Shiana's fear, or what was giving him so much courage, or why he himself was not able to lay hold of him at once.

"Why are you not coming away with me?" he said at last. "Don't you remember the bargain?"

"I remember the bargain right well," said Shiana, but I don't think you remember it." And it

seemed to him, just as it had seemed when he was on the mountain, talking to the woman, that it was not his own voice that was coming from his chest.

"Was it not the bargain," said the Black Man, "that I should give you as much money as would buy leather for you for thirteen years, and that you should come with me when that time should have been spent?"

"That was the bargain," said Shiana.

"Why don't you come along then?" said the other.

"Because the time has not been spent," said Shiana.

"What? The time has not been spent?" said the Black Man. "It is now exactly thirteen years since I put my purse into your hand."

"Perhaps so," said Shiana, "but the purse has

not been thirteen years in my possession yet."

"How is that?" said the Black Man.

"Because it was taken from me for a while," said Shiana.

"It was taken from you!" said the Black Man.

"I would not believe a word from you!"

"You would not? Then what is the reason that you are not able to touch me?" said Shiana.

"Who took it from you?" said the Black Man.

"Yourself, I suppose," said Shiana.

"I did not," said the Black Man.

"I suppose," said Shiana, with a short laugh, "that you think I ought to believe you."

"When was it taken from you?" said the Black

Man.

"I suppose it is you that know that best," said Shiana. "It was your business not to let anybody take it from me." "And I thought I did not," said the Black Man.

"I wonder very much that anyone should have been able to take it from you without my knowledge.

When will the time be up?"

"When the thirteen years are up," said Shiana,

with another laugh.

"You are very witty," said the Black Man, clenching up his claws. "But hold on a while. Some of the wit will be knocked out of you by-and-by,

I promise you."

Shiana's hand was firm upon the jewel he had in his bosom. The two paused, looking at each other. Shiana sitting in his work-seat, with the shoe in his left hand resting on his knee, and his right hand in his bosom; the Black Man standing opposite him, with wonder and anger and hate and malice and every sort of ill-will concentrated in his mouth and eyes, and in the murderous-looking brow that was above them.

"If I had to stay here until morning," said he, "I

will not part from you now!"

"Ach, there is no need for anger," said Shiana. "Take it easy. You know right well that when the time comes I have no chance of escaping from you. You made your bargain firm enough, 'under the virtue of the Holy Things.' I consented to it without making any reservation. I have the fruit of that now. The money was good then, I thought. It is little good now. Thirteen years was a fine long space of time then, when they were before me. What good are they now? But, good or bad, they will have to be finished honestly and justly. You had no right to come until they were finished. They are not finished yet; and I must do my best to finish

this shoe if I can. Go away up from me and sit in that chair above, and let me do my work."

"You are the most extraordinary man I have ever met yet!" said the Black Man. "You have no fear or dread of me any more than you would have

of a puppy dog!"

"Well, that is a comical thing," said Shiana, with a burst of laughter. "You think that because you have horns and claws we should run into an augerhole to hide from you. If it is your bargain you want, fulfil your own side of it, man! The time belongs to me as yet. I want to finish this shoe. You are preventing me from doing it. You are breaking the bargain even now. You lost the time during which the purse was out of my possession. Every moment you are spending there, answering me back every second word, is going down in the account against you. You broke the bargain by coming here to claim me, while you had no right to me until the time should come. You made a mistake in that. You are under no mistake now. You know well that the time has not come yet, and that you are violating the contract. Go up there and sit in that chair above, and don't speak to me again until the right time comes, or you will have dissolved the contract yourself, and I shall be free from you, and I promise you it is not I that will be sorry for it. See! There is the purse. There is the shoe. There is the leather. The time belongs to me as yet. Go up there and sit down or else the contract is dissolved and I am free from you."

The tip of the tail began to twist and turn, just as a cat's tail would when he thought a rat was

coming to him out of a hole.

"Will you go!" said Shiana, and there was a sharp ring in his voice, and he moved as if he were going to stand up.

The Black Man did nothing but turn and go up and sit in the chair as he was ordered. Shiana fell to work.

The Black Man was sitting in the chair with his back to Shiana. The tail was out at the back of the chair and down on the ground, and Shiana could see the claw that was in the tip of it. After a while, by a side-look that Shiana gave over his shoulder. he noticed the claw stretching and contracting and starting, like an eel on a hot stone. Shiana went on with his work, just as if there were no one in the house but himself. It was not long until he heard some kind of rolling going on in the chair. He raised his head and looked up. The Black Man was tossing and twisting himself as if he were trying to get up and could not. Shiana sprang to his feet and went up to him. He stood opposite the Black Man, looking at him. The Black Man was in a terrible state. His mouth was open and saliva running from it. The jaw and the goat's-beard were trembling and shaking. The two horns were loose and falling from side to side on his head. With both hands he was holding fast to the front corners of the chair, and his claws were digging into the wood, and he was writhing and grunting. The tail extended backward and downward, and it was stretched out and down upon the floor, and the claw in the tail was scratching against the floor.

"Well, my fine fellow!" said Shiana, "I rather

fancy I have got a grip of you!"

"Oh! Shiana, you have, and a firm one!" said he. "Oh, let me go until the right time comes!" "Patience, patience!" said Shiana. "There is nothing better than patience. 'Patience conquers fate.'"

"Oh!" said the Black Man, wriggling and grunting, "this fate beats all the patience that was ever practised. This fate belies the proverb. Let me go from you, Shiana, and I will not come until

the right time."

"Yes, and you will come then!" said Shiana. "I am in no such hurry. You will go soon enough for me. The time you will spend in that nice soogaun chair is not going into the account between us. Whatever is wanting of the thirteen years, that want will not become less until you leave that place. If I wished to keep you there for ever, the end of the time would not come for ever."

"Right well you know," said the Black Man, "that if you were to consent to that wish, you would have broken the contract at once, and that I would have the same grip of you then that you have of me now."

"I need not consent to it, and at the same time I need not be in too great a hurry about letting you go. If it were you that had the upper hand and an opportunity of using those claws upon me, you would let me go, wouldn't you? You would, indeed!" said Shiana, and he drew a chair to him and sat down in it, opposite the Black Man.

"How long will you keep me here?" said the Black Man, looking as if he were at the last gasp.

"Answer, you, a few questions for me first," said Shiana, calmly and quietly.

"Ask me them! Ask me them!" said the Black Man.

- "What became of the thimble-man?" said Shiana.
 - "You have him here, stuck fast."

" You!" said Shiana.

- "Me exactly, the very one," said the Black Man.
- "And what were you doing at the fair?" said Shiana.
- "I was doing a good many things there. For one thing, I was watching you to see if you would buy that horse. If you had bought it, the bargain would have been broken by you, and I would have had a grip of you."
 - "And you would have let me go!" said Shiana.
 - "Indeed I would not!" said the Black Man.
- "Just as little notion have I of letting you gofor some time," said Shiana. "So it is just as well for you to keep quiet and have patience. I have the upper hand of you, and I will work my will upon you while I have the opportunity; the very thing you would do to me if you had the opportunity. Perhaps I might have some pity for you if it would be any use, but it would not. If I were to do anything to soften your pains now, you would pay me back for it, by-and-by, by sharpening my own pain as much as you possibly could. It is as well for us to be straight and honest in our dealings with each other. I shall do my utmost against you now, and you may do your utmost against me by-and-by, or as soon as you have the opportunity. It is all the same for me to do good or evil to you now, for any good I should get for it by-and-by. Whatever good act were done for you, you would return nothing for it but evil. Your money has done me great good for the last thirteen years. I think I have given you

a little of your own law in the transaction. I don't say but that I did a good deal to annoy you during those thirteen years, as a return for the benefit of your money. How did you like all the good I did by means of your money? I gave the purse a good airing, didn't I? Did you succeed in destroying much of the good? You know for Whose sake it was that I gave your money away. What do you think of the business?"

The Black Man burst out laughing, great as was his torment.

"Oh, confound you, you fool," said he. "I liked the business splendidly. I spoil it! By the deer, it was not necessary for me to take a particle of trouble about it. I could not, if I did my best a thousand times, spoil the good you did more thoroughly than you spoilt it yourself, you senseless man! You spoilt it yourself, and nobody could have spoilt it better. 'Good' you call your work! Ach, you idiot, it wasn't good you were doing most of the time, but the very cream of mischief. It is my special work you were doing, and a good hand you were at it, and I really assure you that I was most thankful to you. You did my work far better than I could have done it myself. You did it more nicely and tidily and thoroughly than I could have done it at my best. I could not, at my very best, have spoilt so much good and accomplished so much mischief as you have by means of my money. I have often laid out money to advantage, and much is the damage and misfortune and quarrelling and bloodshed that came of it, but I rather think the bit of money I have given you is about the most profitable I have ever expended."

Shiana paused, and you may say he was aston-ished.

"How is that now?" said he. "Or is it that you would think to persuade me that almsgiving is

wrong?"

"Almsgiving is not wrong," said the Black Man.

"But it was not almsgiving on your part to give money that was not yours to people who did not want it much—setting them praising you before the whole country—'Oh, dear me! What a good man Shiana is! What a wonderful amount of good he is doing!" And he twisted up his mouth in derision, in spite of the trouble and pain he was in.

"It was not for that I gave the money," said

Shiana.

"How do I know that?" said the Black Man. "You got yourself highly praised at all events. And there was another spoiling in the business The money did a great deal more harm than good to some of them, even though they might have been badly in want of it. I have some of them now below, hard and fast, and they would not be there but for your giving them my money. If you had allowed them to die of hunger they would be up above now. You gave alms to them to vex me. Wait till we go down, and till you see them. It is then you will understand the benefit of your work, and who it is that you have vexed. Then you will see how thankful they are to you. They praised you when you gave them the money. You will get a different sort of praise from them when you go down by-and-by with me."

"I am sure," said Shiana, "that you would give them every help to make them use the money to their own hurt. The money would not have done them

any harm but for your egging them on."

"The best I could do would have availed little against them, but for your giving them the money," said the Black Man.

Shiana paused for a while, looking at him.

"I ask you this," said he. "What was there to prevent you from giving them the money yourself? Why need you have waited for me to give it to them? Or was it for their good that you did not give it to them? You kept it from them, I suppose, lest it should do them some spiritual injury! That is not the character you bear. Perhaps we have been doing you injustice."

"Drop your irony," said the Black Man. "It was not for their good that I did not give it to them myself. The character I bear is nothing but the truth. I did not give it to them myself because they would not have taken it from me, great as was their desire for it, and great as was their need for it. It was not everybody that would make the

bargain with me that you made."

"I dare say it is not everybody that would have come out of it as I have come out of it," said Shiana.

"Don't be too sure!" said the Black Man. "You

have not come out of it yet."

"Let us leave that as it is for a while," said Shiana. "Let us take things in their order. Let us settle each point by itself. According to you I did more harm than good when I gave away the money in charity. I suppose you remember the first charity I gave out of the purse. You remember the widow to whom I gave the rent so that she should not be evicted out of her little house. I would like you to tell me

what was the particular harm that I did to the

widow when I gave her the rent. "

"You think," said the Black Man, "that you did a great act that day. Perhaps you will be astonished when I say that you prevented on that day an act which was much greater and nobler than the act vou did."

"What was the noble act I prevented on that day? Name it. Indefinite talk of that sort won't do. If I were to let you talk vaguely like that, there is no knowing where we should stop, and you would pawn off black for white and white for black on me. That is your trade. Drop that trade now, and speak plainly. Put its name and surname upon the noble deed which I prevented the day I gave the rent to the widow out of your purse."

"I will speak plainly, never you fear," said the Black Man. "If the widow had been evicted that day she would have conformed her will to the will of God, as she always does, the little wretch! That would have been a nobler act than the act you did when you gave her the rent, a thing that did not impoverish yourself a bit in the world. Do you understand that? Or must I speak more plainly?"

"Very fine," said Shiana. "Very beautiful! Very beautiful, indeed! I suppose," said he, "that if the bailiff had evicted her, he would have done a

nobler act than either of the others."

"How is that?" said the Black Man, with a

sharp, searching look in his eyes.

"Why, look you now, how very dull you are!" said Shiana. "She would have conformed her will to the will of God. But is it not the bailiff that would have forced her to do so! When a widow is evicted, and when she and her poor children are driven out to cold and wandering, if she conforms her will to the will of God it is a noble act. But it is not she that ought to be thanked for it, but the bailiff who evicted her. But for the bailiff she would not have done that noble act. Don't you understand?"

"Oh, indeed, you are a sharp-witted man!" said the Black Man. "If you were suffering as much as I am suffering here, perhaps it would take some of your sharp wit from you."

"You have the widow's remedy for it," said

Shiana.

"What remedy is that?" said the Black Man.

"To conform your will to the will of God; praise be to Him!" said Shiana.

"I would not do that if I were to be given the freedom of Heaven for it!" said the Black Man.

"Oh, is that so?" said Shiana. "By the law, you may have your choice. 'A man's will is his life, even if it consists in his sitting in water'—or, I meant to say, 'in fire.' But tell me this. Do you mean to say, to my very face, that I did not vex you by giving what I gave of your money to God's poor?"

"Not very much," said the Black Man, "and it is not worth talking of, compared with how you vexed me by an act of your own which had nothing

to do with the money at all."

"I don't remember any act I did that was better than what little alms I gave out of the money," said Shiana.

"I put an enemy in your way, and you did not yield to that enemy," said the Black Man.

"An enemy!" said Shiana. "I never had an enemy but yourself. I suppose you would not expect that I would yield to you as long as I could get the better of you."

"I was of little consequence as an enemy, com-

pared with her," said the Black Man.

"Compared with her!" said Shiana. "I do not remember the person. Who was she? Tell me her name. Speak plainly, and drop your hinting."

"The woman that made a stone of your heart and a mist of your head, and a forge-fire of your mind! Is that plain enough for you?" said the Black Man.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE BLACK MAN DEFEATED.

Shiana paused and looked at him. He rubbed his eyes with his hand and looked at him again. The two looked each other in the eyes for some time.

"You are the devil!" said Shiana, at last.

"The devil himself is not a match for you!" said the Black Man. "I thought the money would lead you astray. Seldom a man gets it who does not make misfortune for himself, and perhaps for a great many more on account of it. Misfortune comes of it to him who gets it, and misfortune to him who fails to get it. The man who gets it is waylaid in the night and killed, in order to take it from him. It is the man who has not money that kills the man who has it. There you have

misfortune for both of them on account of money. Money makes twenty misfortunes beside those. Many a man loses his wits with vanity and pride, and self-complacency, who would be humble enough if he were poor. Many a man shortens his life with drink when his pockets are full, who would live to a hundred if they were empty."

"I think you make a slight mistake there," said Shiana. "That man who would murder another to get his money, what need would there be for his committing that murder if he himself had money enough? It seems to me that empty pockets drive people to the bad as often as full pockets do. I suppose you know the proverb: 'Downright wantonness and extreme poverty are the two best things to drive a man to the bad."

"That is exactly where you bothered me completely," said the Black Man. "You had extreme poverty at first, and it did not cause you to go astray. You gave the alms when you had only the three shillings. When I saw that, I knew that the sharpest poverty would not bring you to harm. I was quite sure that wealth would do to you what poverty had failed to do. It did not. When I saw that you cared just as little for riches as you did for poverty I determined to come at you in another way. I put that other enemy in your way. My knowledge of human nature is wide, and my experience of it is intimate. I have often met a person whom poverty could not bring to harm, and I have often met a person whom wealth could not bring to harm. But I seldom ever met a person whom that other enemy could not take off his feet. That other enemy did not take you off your feet,

and that fact has taken me off my feet. I am at a loss to make out what sort of man you are at all."

"An enemy! An enemy, you call her!" said Shiana. "She is not an enemy, and well you know she is not. It is not you that put her in my way. It is God that put her in my way, praise be to Him! If you were going to put someone like her in my way, no fear but it would be a very different sort of person from her. If you were choosing an enemy for me you would choose an enemy who would be a real enemy. Drop your prevarication. Tell the truth. You do not like the truth, of course, but you have to tell the truth in that chair, much as you hate it. Tell me the truth. Why have you called her an enemy? And why have you said that

it was you that put her in my way?"

"For all your wisdom and your understanding, you do not understand my business," said the Black Man. "You imagine that it is from his enemy ill-luck and misfortune and evil come upon a man. You are mistaken. Friendship and friendliness and love and affection are the things that drag half the world to their bane, or rather the greater part of the world. A man will be on his guard against his enemy, but he will not be on his guard against his friend. If a man gets harmful advice from his enemy, he will not take the advice; but a man will do a thing at the instance of his friend which he would never do of his own accord. For one man who does what is bad for him, out of his own counsel, there are twenty who are put up to do it by the counsel of some friend. If they were let alone, perhaps, they might do what was good for

them. If it was from an enemy they got the advice there is no fear that they would take it. Often a man has done what was good for him by refusing the advice of an enemy. It is not from an enemy that a person is ever in danger of doing what is harmful to him, but from his friend. The dearer the friend the greater the danger and the worse the harm, because the readier the yielding. If it be love for a woman that is driving a man to his bane, there is an end of good counsel, and there is an end of the man's defending himself. There is an end of that man's sense and wisdom and understanding and judgment. The more worthy the woman the more complete the senselessness in the man. If a charming, good, sensible, handsome young woman gives the love of her heart completely to that man, and he to her, that man will wrong his own judgment, and he will do what is against his real welfare with his eyes open, sooner than he would do what he thinks she would not like; and she will do the same thing exactly, sooner than do what she thinks he would not like. The proverb is at sea in that one matter at all events. 'Downright wantonness' is a good thing to send a man to the bad, and extreme poverty is a good thing to send a man to the bad, but there is a thing that is better than either of them for the purpose, and that is love, and friendship and affection. I have people now below in hell, people who have worked their own ruin on account of love or of friendship, and there is no danger that they would be there had there been nothing to send them there but wantonness or poverty. There is many a man and woman to whom I failed completely to do any

mischief by wantonness or by poverty, and who were not long in ruining themselves when I put that other enemy in their way. As I told you, I put that other enemy in your way, but I have had nothing by it. I failed to gain any advantage over you—a rare thing with me. I don't think you are a human being at all, in the true sense of the word. You don't like me to call her an enemy. Is not a man's most inimical enemy the one that causes the greatest mischief to him?"

"I give you the lie out of your own mouth," said Shiana. "She never did any mischief to me, and for that reason you lie when you call her an

enemy."

"She has not done a mischief to you, but it is not she that is to be thanked for it, nor me. She did her best to that end, and I did my best to that end. She did her best, on account of the greatness of her love for you. I did my best, and I promise you it was not through love of you. We have both failed in the game. I worked the most skilful artifice of my craft against you, but you have beaten me."

"I do not admire your craft," said Shiana, "whatever opinion you yourself may have of it. I was going to say, 'May you not be rewarded for your work!' but I cross you again. I say most heartily, 'That you may be rewarded for it!' It would be a great pity such labour should go unrequited. You put an enemy, you say, in my way. I think you made a mistake somewhere in your calculations. Things do not always turn out as they are expected to do. You gave me money in the hope that it would be the ruin of me. You failed with the money. You put another enemy,

as you say, in my way. You failed in the second plot as you failed in the first. Tell me exactly where you lay the blame for the failure of the plot. Speak plainly and fully. I do not like vagueness of language. No doubt it was you that put the money in my way. I do not believe you when you say that you put anything else in my way. You are too great an adept at lying. Nobody can believe a thing from you unless his own very

eyes see it. Tell me the truth."

"I tell the truth sometimes," said the Black Man, "and I will tell it now. I will tell it to you in such a way that your own very eyes will see it. I like to tell it to you, because I know you won't like it very well. I expected that the money would drive you astray, as it drives every one astray who gets it, almost. I expected that I should have you soon without putting myself to much trouble about you. When I found you at the fair going to buy the horse, I thought I had you at once. I thought your tune was played, almost before it had been begun. When I saw you going away without making the purchase I wondered what was the matter with you. I insulted you before the people to see if you would return and pay the money. You did not return. You bent your head and went off with yourself like a mean dog-"

"I understand," said Shiana, "go on."

"There is a young woman west there," said the Black Man, "and from the day she was baptised up to the present day, I have failed utterly to bend or to move her will or her mind. Whatever hindrance I put in her way she never stumbles over it. She was coming home from the town

one evening. I caused her to be delayed. She fell asleep in a bend of the road. When she awoke out of her sleep it was the dead of night. She started for home, trembling with fear. When she was facing west towards Bohar na Bro, who should be in the middle of the road there before her but the ghost. I thought she would drop dead. I put myself into your appearance. I walked out past her. She recognised you in me. I faced straight for the ghost, with what looked like a black-handled knife in my hand. There was soon an end of the ghost. Then I returned to the young woman and escorted her west into the door of her father's house."

"If she had known who it was that was escorting her!" said Shiana.

"She thought it was you that were escorting her," said the Black Man, "and I think she was a little bit proud to think that any man would put himself in such danger for her sake. From that forward she conceived an extremely high regard for you. You never saw a human creature in the state in which she was from that night forward. She was just in the same case with that poet who said:—

A wretched cause is the cause through which I am in agony.

My judgment drifting apart from my will, and my will from my sense.

My will refuses to understand the sort of will that my judgment clearly approves.

Or if it understands it, it will not have any but the will of its own judgment.' "The poor girl knew that her will was going against her good sense; her will driving her on, and her good sense holding her back; her will giving her heart and mind up to you, and her good sense showing her plainly that she was making a fool of herself on account of you. The struggle was so severe in her mind that her appetite failed, and that she could not sleep a wink at night. When she used to see you (and I took care that it was often), all the reasonableness she possessed seemed to vanish from her head and mind. Afterwards, when she used to recollect herself, you would think that her heart would break in two with shame and humiliation and sorrow. At last she sent the widow to you as you know."

"May you be rewarded for your trouble!" said

Shiana, most heartily.

"I am fully rewarded already," said the Black Man, "and it is you I have to thank for it. It was I that put her in your way. Don't have any doubt about it. I put her in your way, and I kept her in your way. You knew all her excellence. You understood the goodness and the nobility of her mind. You perceived the beauty of her countenance and of her appearance and of her faultless person. There was no other woman of your acquaintance who was at all near being as handsome as she. You are a deep, dark, inscrutable man. It is hard for anyone to know what is in your heart when it suits you to keep it to yourself, but you could not keep from me how you stood regarding her. Deep and dark as your heart is, you were not able to keep from me the knowledge that the love of her was as strong and as steadfast within

you as ever was the love of a woman in the heart of any man that ever lived. I did not think there was any man living in this world who could go against it! I don't think anything ever astonished me so much as the answer you made to the widow. If ever I did my best I did it on that occasion, to place you in such a way that you would not be able to draw back. You beat me in spite of my best. You put the best woman in Ireland out of your heart, though the love of her was implanted within you! You put her from your heart, although her heart was being torn asunder through love of you! I don't know if you are a human being at all! You would not have cared if you had brought her to the grave! And I wouldn't care, but for the reason. To tear asunder your own heart and hers for the sake of the-"

"Finish it!" said Shiana.

"For the sake of Him who is above," said the Black Man. "Saviour, you call Him. That was the act that gave you the upper hand over me. That was the act with which you crushed and paralysed me, and it was not your good-for-nothing

and worthless almsgiving."

"You have talked a great deal," said Shiana, "but in all the talk you have told only one side of the subject. It is true that love and friendship and affection and sympathy send many people astray. But is it not a great wonder that you do not perceive that those same things bring many people to good also? A man will do a thing at the instance of his friend which he would never do of his own accord. And a man will often do what is good for him, through good advice from a sincere and

wise friend, whereas perhaps he would do what was harmful to himself if he had not that friend to give him that advice at the right time. 'If it be love for a woman,' said you, 'that is driving a man to ruin, there is an end to that man's selfdefence.' Very good. But suppose the woman is a good and a wise woman, a woman who will weigh in her mind, carefully and correctly, the things that would be bad for that man, and who will do her best to lure him away from them; a woman who will always pray to God for that man, asking God to turn him away from everything bad, and to sour his mind to what would be good for him, spiritually and temporally; a woman who would use the love that man has for her to make him avoid the wrong thing that he likes, and do the right thing that she likes; don't you think that woman is a good help, together with the grace of God, to make that man do what is good for him and avoid what is bad for him? According to you it is only good sense that can make a man do what is good for him, and it is only imprudence that can make a man do what is bad for him. You did a disastrously bad thing for yourself once. Your intelligence was great at that time. But I think your intelligence made a fool of itself. Intellect is a very good thing, no doubt; but there are things that are a great deal better. It often happens that love and friendship and affection and sympathy do good which all the wisdom in the world would fail to do. There is a thing different from all these and better than them all, and better than any wisdom that might accompany them. I don't know whether you have any knowledge of that

thing. It is the thing called humility. I know well you are not fond of that thing. When you were considering the things best calculated to drive people to wrong-doing, it is a pity you did not reflect a little on the thing which is the best preventive of wrong-doing. Where humility is, there is the grace of God. The grace of God is far more powerful to keep a man right than all those things you have named are to send a man to the mischief. It was not that act of mine that ruined you. I do not deserve much thanks for that act. I did it because I could not help doing it. The goodness of the woman was the cause of it. I could not do such a wrong to such a woman. Bad as I am, I am not as bad as you yet. If you had put in my way a woman not so good as she, who knows but that your plot might have succeeded better. I will tell you what defeated you. Evil outstripped evil with you. One bad side of your work defeated the other bad side of it. You tried to run 'the dog's double race for the two cheeses.' 'The sand-piper cannot fish both sides of the river at once.'-If I had married her at that time how would she be now, and her children, if they existed?"

"And is not that exactly what I wanted?" said the Black Man. "You were as deeply in love with her as any man ever was in love with a woman. I have never seen two people so wrapped up in each other, so fond of each other, so filled with reverence for each other. Who would have thought it was possible for you to put her from your heart? Who would have thought that she could be parted from you and live? I confess that the thing has

confounded me."

"I put her from my heart for the Saviour's sake," said Shiana. "I could not do such a wrong to such a woman. There is the whole case for you. If it was you that put her in my way, it is you yourself that have brought defeat upon yourself. You said you failed to bend or turn her will. It was not a wise thing for you to try your hand against her in this business. You ought to have known her of old. You thought to get a grip of us both, and there is a firm grip upon yourself now."

"You are wrong," said the Black Man. "She is not the cause of the plot's going against me, but you. She would have married you at once if you had asked her to marry you. But what am I saying! It was not necessary for you to ask her. She was so much out of her wits through love of you that she did a thing which I did not think she could have done, whatever might happen to her. She asked you to marry her --- and you refused her! Confound you, what sort of man are you! It was your act that destroyed me. The nobleness of that act it was that destroyed me. To put that woman from your heart as you did, rather than do wrong. I wonder if there is another man living who could do the like! That is what destroyed me. That is what put me here and you there."

"It has happened very well," said Shiana. "I here and you there. I find no fault with the arrange-

ment, whoever is the cause of it."

"Not so with me," said the Black Man.

"'Let each one praise his luck as he finds it," said Shiana.

"Here! here! Let me go!" said the Black Man. "The mischief is on this place, it is so excruciating. I have not got such a boiling for a long time. Hang you, let me go! What do you want of me here?"

"Gently! gently!" said Shiana. "It might be a long time before we would be face to face like this again, and there is another little matter puzzling me. I have been listening to your talk there for a good while. I have an exact description from you of all the deceit and treachery and crooked dealing which you have practised upon myself for the last thirteen years. In all that trickery, however, there was nothing but what anybody ought to expect that he would get from you. But the act you have done against that young woman in the west, without reason or cause, without want or necessity, without her having deserved it from you in any way under Heaven, is, I think, the most abominable act that anybody ever saw done by man or devil. That act could not be surpassed in treachery, or in meanness, or in wickedness. I think it is the vilest and most malicious act that ever was done. Shame upon you! Oh, shame upon you, you vile thing! And you yourself not only acknowledging it, but boasting of it! I did not think the like of you was to be found, even down at the bottom of hell itself! Horror upon you! Oh, the horror of my heart upon you! And to think that they say you were once the most beautiful of the angels, and the brightest, and the noblest, and of the highest glory of all that were in the uppermost Heaven above! 'Praise to the King of Saints, there is much between yesterday and to-day' with you. It was a long fall and a deep one, for you. I dare say that once upon a time you had very little notion that such

a fate would overtake you alive as that I should hold you fast in that soogaun chair!"

"That is not the thing that is on your mind,"

said the Black Man.

"I am coming to it," said Shiana. "You take a great deal of trouble in working up evil. I believe you work harder for evil than anybody ever worked for good. And you gain nothing by your toil but evil. You have great knowledge, and you have great sense. It is bought sense with you, at least the chief part of it. You have a keen intelligence. You have an active mind. The only use you make of all those fine faculties is to work evil with them. Nothing comes of your labours but evil. It is a miserable state of things with you. Would it not be just as easy for you to devote all your toil and knowledge and intelligence and penetration and sense to the accomplishment of some useful purpose? Perhaps, sooner or later, you might have something other than evil as the fruit of your labour."

The Black Man looked Shiana straight in the eyes, and Shiana thought he had never seen so diabolical

a look.

"Look here, Shiana," said he. "No one ever spoke to me like that before. Perhaps if they had I would not be as I am to-day. I feel half inclined to take your advice and to act on your suggestion in future. Perhaps it may be better late than never. But what do you want with me here now? Do you hear me talking to you? Let me go, and you may take thirteen years more!"

"Yes indeed!" said Shiana, "and then if I go to a fair to buy a cow or a horse you will come in the shape of a thimble-rigger, and you will call me 'the little yellow shoemaker with the malvogue,' before all the people, and you will be watching me, unknown to me, day and night, to see when I may make some mistake. I have had enough of that sort of bargain."

"Let us put it in the bargain that I shall not come near you at all during the time," said the

Black Man.

"Nor any one from you," said Shiana.

"Nor any one from me," said the Black Man.

"And that I shall have power to make any use

I like of the money," said Shiana.

"Make any use you choose of it," said the Black Man. "Buy all the cows and horses at all the fairs in Ireland with it, if you like."

"And that I shall put the virtue of the Holy Things upon you, just as you did upon me," said

Shiana.

"I am satisfied," said the Black Man.

"Say, 'Be it a bargain,'" said Shiana.

"Be it a bargain," said the Black Man.

"By the virtue of the Holy Things," said Shiana.

"By the virtue of the Holy Things," said the Black Man.

My dear people! No sooner was that word out of the Black Man's mouth than he was up out of the chair with his two hands stretched out to seize upon Shiana.

"My fine fellow," said he, "I said I would not

come, but I did not say that I would go!"

Well became Shiana, he drew his right hand out of his bosom, with the jewel in it, and he held up the hand against his foe.

"The Sign of the Cross of the Crucifixion between

me and you!" said he, and he made the Sign of the Cross with the hand and the jewel in it.

When the Black Man saw the hand, he drew back a little. When Shiana said the sacred words as he was making the Sign of the Cross, the light blazed up in the little ball so strongly that it shone out through the hand so that the bones and veins could be seen. At the moment when Shiana was finishing the words, the Black Man was turned into a ball of fire just above the chair. Then there came something like a narrow tip underneath upon the ball of fire, and the ball went down through the chair in a chain of fire, and down through the ground, exactly in the place where the shilling was.

While the chain of fire was slipping down through the ground, Shiana felt a kind of creeping of the skin, and something like a surging of blood in his limbs and in his body and up in his head.

"Praise be to the King of Saints!" said he.

His head was ready to burst with pain. He crept off as well as he could to the place where his bed was, and lay down upon it. The next moment he was unconscious and speechless.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A LAPSE OF MEMORY.

When he woke out of his sleep he found himself repeating those words which he had left unfinished when he was talking to the barefooted woman on the hill.

"I give thanks to the Eternal Father Who created you!—and to Jesus Christ Who redeemed you!—and to the Holy Ghost Who sanctified you!"

He imagined he was still lying on the moss-plot, and he thought she was there beside him, but without his being able to see her. When he moved his hand and found the bed-clothes on him he was filled with wonder. A still greater wonder seized him when he looked about him and saw the walls and roof-timbers of the house. He began to meditate and to think and to reason in his mind to try to make out how he had come in from the hill. He could not understand the thing at all. He looked toward the window. He saw a person over near the window. It was a woman. Moreover, she was a nurse—the same nurse that had been taking care of Grev Dermot when he was ill! Shiana's wonder and amazement reached their height when he saw her. He did not know in the world what had brought her there, nor what had brought himself where he was, whereas it was outside on the hill, on the moss-plot, he had lain down to sleep in the beginning of the previous night, as he thought. What had brought him in from the hill? Or if he had come in of himself how was

it that he did not remember coming in? Was it that he had walked in in his sleep? He felt his bones sore. He looked at his two hands. They were nothing but bones. He put his hand down upon his chest. His ribs were as bare as an old basket!

"I don't know in the earth or the world," said he to himself, "what has happened to me!"

He called the woman. He did not recognise his own voice, it was so weak. She ran to him at once.

"You have got over it. There is no danger of you now, with the help of God!"

"What have I got over?" said he.

"Why," said she, "the worst brain fever I ever met with. But it is gone, great thanks to God for it! Don't talk any more now; you are too weak to talk much. You will soon be strong enough for it, with the help of God. I have a drink here for you. Take it and drink it. It will do you good. There!"

"How long have I been here, Mary?" said he.

"It is three weeks since I came," said she, "and
I think you were three days ill before I was sent
for."

Shiana lay back and closed his eyes, but it was not to sleep.

"Three weeks! What has happened to me at all?" said he to himself. "Mary!" said he to the woman.

"Yes, Shiana," said she.

"Have you any idea how the illness came upon me?"

"I heard them saying," said she, "that probably you had slept out in the open, and that you had been attacked by some serious illness which affected your head. Your head was very bad, anyway. It was bad during the whole time. Four people were hardly able to keep you in bed sometimes. But whatever it was that was troubling your brain, it is gone. You will soon be as well as ever you were. Go to sleep now for a bit, my dear. Don't talk any more for a while. Much talk would only do you harm. Sleep is what will do you good. Lie back now, my son, and see if you can get a good sleep, fine and quiet and sound." And she settled the pillow under his head. "There!" said she, "don't speak any more now for a while."

He closed his eyes, pretending that he was falling asleep; but instead of sleeping at all, he began to think. He had cause for thinking. Three weeks gone, if the words of the nurse were true; whereas he himself could have sworn that it was only three hours since he was outside on the hill, on the mossplot, talking to the barefooted woman! Whatever way he looked at the thing, he could not account for any more time in it than that. But then, on the other hand, what had made him so weak as he was? What had made him so thin? He was as weak, and as thin, and as much wasted away as a person would be who had gone through three months' illness! How could such a change have come upon his body and limbs in only three hours? If he had had so much pain and sickness and disturbance of mind as the nurse had said, was it not a very extraordinary thing that he had not the smallest remembrance of it? However heavily or soundly a man might sleep, when he would wake out of that sleep he would have some notion of the length or shortness of the time he had spent in sleep, even though he might not remember anything that had happened to him during the time. It was not so with Shiana. It was not alone that everything that had happened to him had gone clean out of his remembrance, but that the time itself had clean gone from him. He felt quite sure that it was three hours, or thereabouts, since he had been out on the hill, talking to the barefooted woman, and he felt in his mind that it was impossible for any more time to have passed. Where had the three weeks come from? That was the question.

The time was completely gone out of his remembrance and out of his mind. He would swear that it was not more than three hours or so since he was on the moss-plot, on the mountain, speaking with the barefooted woman. He had no remembrance whatever of all that had happened to him from the moment he parted from her, until the moment he recovered his senses on his bed. That time, and all that had happened to him during that time, and that portion of his sense and of his memory which belonged to that time, were as clean gone out of his mind as if they had been cut out of his head with a knife. He had not a particle of recollection of the fine day he had had on the mountain, nor of the beautiful view, nor of the fine tracts of country, nor of his climbing the mountains, nor of his picking the monadauns, nor of the treat that Nance had given him, nor of how he had returned home, nor of the strain that was on his mind while he was waiting for the Black Man, nor of the arrival of the Black Man, nor of the discussion that was between them, nor of the way in which they had parted company.

But he did remember that the thirteen years

had come to an end.

"To-day he is to come," said he to himself. "It is a bad time, when I am so weak——But what is that I am saying?" said he again. "This woman says it is three weeks since I fell ill! I was not ill yesterday. It was on the morrow of yesterday that he was to come. It is a strange thing if there are three weeks between yesterday and to-day! And if the three weeks are there, the day has passed and that villain has not come! Perhaps he may not come at all! They are a queer three weeks! Where is there room for them! It is not more than three hours since I was talking to her, and listening to her, and looking at her! Oh! what an angel she is! What an angel of light she is!"

He remained for a long time thinking of her, of her beautiful face, and of the light that shone from her eyes, and her forehead, and her mouth. He thought of how the light went from her eyes into his own eyes and deep into his head and down into his heart. He remembered the words he had said when he felt the happiness that came upon him, and when he was giving thanks to the Eternal Father for having created her, and to the Only Son for having redeemed her, and to the Holy Ghost for having sanctified her. He remembered that she spoke, but he did not remember what she said. He remembered having heard her voice and the sound of her speech, but he did not remember that

he understood what she said. He had no recollection at all of the meaning of the speech. No matter how long or how short a time he would go on thinking he found it impossible to discover in his mind that there was any longer space of time between him and when he parted from her on the mountain, than the one while of the night, three hours or so. He thought the sleep which came upon him when he was parting from her, was the sleep out of which he had just awakened that moment.

Grey Dermot came to see him.

"How long is it since I fell ill, Dermot?" said he. "I don't remember exactly."

"That is not the way with me," said Dermot. "I remember quite exactly, and it is no wonder for me to do so. I have a good right to be exact about it. It will soon be three weeks. No fear of the time coming unawares upon me. As soon as Michael heard you were in bed he rushed up here. and I had to mind the shop myself, though I was but badly fit for it. There hasn't been a night since you fell ill that he did not come up. He used to go down again at day-break, but even so he was very little use below. He used to be found asleep in the shop when people came in looking for leather. He used to stay here helping the nurse until Short Mary would come. Mary used to come nearly every night, at the latter end of the night. She was here this morning before Michael went down, but not a ray of consciousness had come to you at that time. You knew nobody. For my part, I never saw a sick man so clean out of his senses as you were during the whole time. You couldn't speak a single word. When I was sick I was delirious, but even if I was,

I was not out of my mind altogether; I had sense and memory in a sort of way. I used to know the people, and understand what they said, and speak to them, although there might not be much coherence in my speech sometimes. But there was never as much as a single word to be heard out of your mouth. From what I am told, I don't think that as much as a single word came from your lips from the day you fell sick until you spoke to-day to Art's daughter Mary. Not only that, but one would think that you had no feeling in you. You took no notice of anything. Nobody thought you would recover. The priest was here very often, and he failed to get a word out of you. I dare say it won't be long until he will be here now, and I promise you he will be surprised and glad. Everybody will be surprised and glad, for nobody had any hope of your recovery. But indeed you have thrown it off, great thanks to God for it! Anyone looking at you now would never think you were the same man who was there yesterday. No one was able to make out what was the matter with you. The nurse said it was brain fever, but I don't think anybody believed her. The priest sent two or three doctors here during the time to see if they could do anything for you. None of them did anything but look at you and go away. You never saw such a state of bewilderment as we were all in."

So Shiana gathered the truth of the matter from one neighbour and another, and at length it was borne in upon him that no doubt the time had been passed, in whatever way room was found for it. But how the room was found, or how more than three weeks could have been spent while there were, in

his own mind, only three hours instead of three weeks, he failed utterly to make out, and he had to give it up.

But it was all the same. As soon as his sense and reason returned to him he began to improve rapidly. The flesh began to come. Bare as his ribs were, it was not long before it ceased to be possible to count them. Soon his limbs were getting stout, thin as they had been. He recovered more rapidly than even Grey Dermot did. If the sort of illness he had was a puzzle to people, the recovery he made puzzled them still more. When people saw the sort of sickness he had, and how he was out of his right mind and senses, without consciousness or speech, some of them said there was no possibility of his ever rising out of the bed he was in. Others said that, should it happen that he recovered from the sickness, that would be little good for him, because he would never be anything but a fool, and that it would be better for him to die than to be such an object of pity before the people. Others said that things would be worse with him than even that, because his speech was as much ruined as his mind, and that if he were to live eighty years he would never speak a word during his life.

When they all found that he was up, and recovering fast, and that he had his speech in full vigour, and that there was nothing defective or missing in his sense or in his reason, but that he was as discerning and as sharp-witted as ever, they were very glad, no doubt, but their wonder was as great as their joy, and I promise you they were sorry enough that they had not kept silence until they knew what

he would do. What they said between themselves was, "If it had been any other man than himself one might make some guess as to what he would do, but nobody ever yet made a guess about that fellow that didn't go wide of the mark."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PROMISE FULFILLED.

That remark that Grey Dermot had made about Short Mary, "That she used to come for the latter part of almost every night," was a remark that set

Shiana thinking.

"Well!" said he to himself, "I am in a queer position. I told her I was bound before God never to marry. Certainly I was bound not to drag her. or any other girl like her, into the danger that was before me, as I thought. That villain said he would come for me as soon as the thirteen years were spent. I was quite sure he would come. The time is spent. It is spent even without counting those three weeks. I have the purse here yet. It is as well filled as it was any day during the time. It is a great wonder that he has not come either for me or for the purse. It is hard to make out the meaning of it all. I suppose if he were coming that he would come the day he promised. I don't know what put him off it. One thing is certain enough. It was not for my good that he stayed away. He

would have come but that something prevented him. What prevented him from coming? What kept him away from me? That is the question. Who prevented him from coming? It would be great fun if the purse were to remain with me in spite of him. I have not used a bit of the money, except to buy leather, since the day the purse was taken from me at the fair. Fear prevented me from going beyond the word of the bargain. Perhaps there was no need for the fear. If he was so determined upon the bargain why did he not come when the thirteen years were up? If it is the case that he was not able to come and enforce his bargain when the time was up, there is every likelihood that he will not be able to touch me, no matter what use I make of the money. At all events it will not be long until I put the matter to the test, please God! . . . It is the greatest pity that I did not know he was not going to come! . . . It was a great kindness for her to come here every night! . . . But it is firmly fixed in her mind that I am bound, and that it is a bond that cannot be loosened. . . . It is a comical state of things for us!"

Mary and her father were the first two people that came to see him as soon as they heard that he had recovered consciousness and speech. Short Mary herself came often afterwards, and she told him exactly, from beginning to end, what sort of illness he had had, and what were the symptoms that accompanied it. It is not of the sickness nor of the symptoms Shiana used to be thinking as he listened to her, but of his own reflections. How should he tell her what sort of bond was on him not to marry? How would she receive the matter

when it would be told to her? When she first heard of the bond she said it was a noble bond and a holy bond. What would she say now if she were told what sort it was, and what was the cause of it? If he were to tell her about the purse and about the Black Man and about the bargain, perhaps she would conceive a hatred for himself, and that she would not come to see him any more. And how could he explain and make clear to her what sort the bond was, without telling her the whole matter? On the other hand, how could be remain any longer without telling her that there was a misunderstanding in her mind concerning the bond that was upon him? When he told her the first day that the bond was upon him, she took the matter in a sense that was at variance with the truth. He left it to her in that way at the time, because he thought that the end of the thirteen years would put an end to his own life, and that then it would be no matter what sort of bond it had been nor what had been the cause or the source of it. But here was the whole thing now on a different footing. He could not possibly leave the wrong impression on her mind any longer. There was no escape for him from giving her the truth of the matter as soon as possible. It was about all this work that he had to do that he used to be thinking and reflecting, while she used to be telling him the extraordinary symptoms that accompanied the illness he had had, and the strength that was in him, when four men used to have enough to do to keep him from jumping out of bed.

The day he was west at the house with her, to tell her that he was bound, before God, never to marry, all he wanted to do was to remove completely from her mind the idea that there was any possibility of his ever marrying her. When he said that to her, she said a certain thing to him. He was not at all prepared for the remark she made, but he did not pay much attention to it at the time. This is what she said: "If it is a noble bond for you, it ought to be a noble bond for me." He began to ask himself now what was the meaning she had for those words, or whether it was possible that she had taken a bond upon herself, before God, never to marry.

Thoughts of that sort, and things of that sort, and meditations of that sort were running through his mind constantly during his recovery. But though they caused him a good deal of anxiety and vexation, and mental puzzling, they did not put any check upon his convalescence. He continued to put on flesh and to become strong and vigorous, until people were saying that he would turn out better and firmer and more substantially healthy than he had ever been before the illness came upon him.

Just a month after he had left his bed, there came to him, up from the town, on horseback, the King's Captain, and twenty horsemen along with him. Each man had on his silk cloak and his regimental cap, and his long sword down by the flank of his horse, and his short sword in his belt, and his fine long ashen spear standing up high, with its long slender head of bright, sharp steel, shining and flashing in the sun, and the silk ribbons dancing in the wind, tied, between the iron and the wood.

upon the spear. Anyone looking at those men, and seeing their bright, sharp, clear eyes, and their firm, unflinching faces, and their curly heads, and their stout, strong, well-shaped shoulders, and their broad chests, and their thick heavy thighs, and their high-instepped feet, and their sinewy limbs, and their hard fists, would say without doubt that they were dangerous people for any enemy who would attempt to meddle with them.

"Well, Shiana," said the Captain, "that space of time is spent. I dare say you have put everything in order by this time. The King is impatient to see you below near him. It is for you that we

have come."

"Very good, sir," said Shiana. "Whatever is in order or not in order, the thing that I promised I will fulfil."

And he went away with them.

ABBIE.—Oh, dear me, Peg! It is broad day!

KATE.—And see! Here is Sheila with her head in my lap, sound asleep!

Nora.—It is time for your mother to have come, Peg. They said they would have that piece spun before daybreak.

PEG.—Here she is coming in to us.

Mary.—Well, girls, have you been lonesome? Is the story finished? "Godfrey," or "Stephen"—or—bad manners to him, what name is it you call him?

PEG.—Shiana, mother.

MARY.—Oh, yes, Shiana. Is he dead?

KATE.—No, Mary. He is gone off with the King's people.

Mary.—To be making shoes for the King, I suppose. See, Peg, don't let these girls go for a while. Don't let them go off as they went off that other night. I have brought something with me. We will have a little feast. Where is Sheila? Asleep! Ah, she has done the right thing!

THE END



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